

THE AUTHOR

THE MAHABHARATA
AS A HISTORY AND A DRAMA.

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By

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BHARATA-BANI-BHUSANA

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WITH A FOREWORD BY
SIR SARVEPALLI RADHAKRISHNAN, KT.

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"It presents us with a home-grown poetry and a home-grown religion; and history has preserved to us at least this one relic, in order to teach us what the human mind can achieve if left to itself, surrounded by a scenery and by conditions of life that might have made man's life on earth a paradise, if man did not possess the strange art of turning even a paradise into a place of misery."

MAX MULLER.

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TO

THE MOST HONOURABLE

THE MARQUESS OF ZETLAND

P.C., G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E.,

WHO BY HIS DEEP STUDIES OF INDIAN THOUGHT AND CULTURE HAS ENDEARED HIMSELF TO CULTURED INDIANS AND AS AN ADMINISTRATOR AND STATESMAN HAS CONTRIBUTED SO LARGELY TO A TRUER UNDERSTANDING OF THIS LAND OF BHARATA,

THIS WORK
IS MOST RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED
BY THE AUTHOR

FOREWORD.

Those who read the *Mahābhārata* merely as beautiful poetry or enjoy it with antiquarian interest as something old and naive and quaint miss its real spirit. Living in this 'so-called twentieth century' we are led to believe that our ways of thinking, feeling and acting are true to reason and common sense while those of the *Mahābhārata* are at best of aesthetic interest. Such 'advanced' spirits, on picking up this book will be tempted to regard it as a waste of labour. The author Rai Promatha Nath Mullick Bahadur believes that a book which has fashioned the destiny of a large section of humanity must have some essential lessons for us. It deals with the perpetually recurrent situations of life which are as real and as true to-day as they were ten thousand years ago and invites us to adopt a spiritual mood towards them.

The Hindu culture is a religious one. Religion is not a limited sphere of human activity but embraces the whole of it. Art and science, politics and law, morality and philosophy are abstractions from it. Being integral, Hindu culture rebels against the dualism of the secular and the religious. Religion is essentially practical and so expresses itself in our struggle against nature and fellowmen. *Moksa* or spiritual freedom and *dharma* or righteousness are interrelated. In history we see the will of God. Those who stand up for the ideal of *dharma* are the servants of God. In enumerating the special qualities of the hero of the Rāmāyana, prominent mention is made of *dharma*.

raksitā jivalokasya dharmasya pariraksitā raksitā svasya dharmasya. *

It will be a mistake to lay all the stress on the warlike and athletic aspects of the *Mahābhārata* for it speaks to us of the vast eternal background against which wars are lost or won, and kingdoms perish or survive. It speaks to us of the imperishable law of *dharma* which redeems our life from casualty and gives

* **Rāmāyana I. 1. 13-14.**

grace and dignity to the drift of our days. It points out how not merely public activities but private relations, of man and wife, of child and parent, of comrade and fellow are charged with meaning. When we surrender ourselves to the spirit of the poem, a great grief descends on our spirit and we grow ashamed of our turbulence, of our hurry, of our ignoble self-pity, our insatiable discontent.

S. R.

PREFACE.

In Ancient India the initiation of all wise and noble things came first from individuals. The honour and glory of the average man lay in his ability to follow that initiative, it was a sort of hero worship. Many had been led and guided by the highly gifted men of those days. Everything depended upon the customs and laws of the country; their despotism was then considered the standing obstacle to all human advancement in the spheres of civilisation and culture. No question of change was raised or considered unless strong opposition was offered to those customs and laws. The contest between the two parties of Conservatives and Liberals constituted the most interesting phase in the history of India. The greatness of sages, philosophers, patriots and kings had much to do with the fate of the Indian nation in the course of time. The claims to individuality in the rulers of kingdoms were considered the great assets of a country and a nation. All the great political, social and religious changes in India were wrapped up with the education and culture of the leaders and their ability to bring the people under the common influence of one God and religion and under one just Emperor of India. Any deviation from this ideal was then considered impious in the political world. The Pandavas, under the guidance of the great Sri Krishna, combined with many powerful kings of India and tried for years to impress this great ideal upon the other kings who were against it and who considered "Might is the only right" on earth at the great sacrifice of Rajasuya Yajna.

My first attempt at a critical study of the Mahabharata* has been well received by eminent scholars of the day, to whom I owe a debt of gratitude. Now, by the Grace of God, I am permitted to complete the portion devoted to the plot of the original Mahabharata by Vyasa. I ask to be excused for any occasional lapses in this great work, for I have tried to make it as short and concise as possible so that it may not prove tedious to readers.

I shall deem my labours amply rewarded if students of

* The Mahabharata, As it was, Is and Ever shall be.

the great Epic and the general public find it interesting and accept it in the spirit in which it has been conceived and written.

It is a work which not many can study at first hand; and yet it contains matter that should be popular with the general reader. There is much in it that is valuable as history and much that reads like a novel. It is a kaleidoscope in which history and legend are intermingled to form a symmetrical pattern. To bring the story of the Mahabharata, its influence and importance, before a wider circle of the reading public has been my object throughout this present work.

The work is in two parts. The first part deals with the Mahabharata as it was originally conceived by the illustrious Vyasa* and is more or less a history of India in those days. The second part describes the end of the struggle between the Bharata Kings of India for the position of Emperor of India. The first part culminates in the Rajasuya sacrifice; the second in the Asvamedha sacrifice.

Finally, I must thank all those learned scholars, rulers and the enlightened public for the encouragement which they have accorded to me by their reception of my previous work, and trust that they will extend their approbation to this humble attempt to complete that work by the publication of the Mahabharata as a History and a Drama.

I beg most respectfully to offer my grateful and sincere thanks to the Most Honourable The Marquess of Zetland for his kind permission to dedicate this work to him and to Sir Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan for kindly contributing a foreword.

PROMATHA NATH MULLICK.

129, CORNWALLIS STREET,
CALCUTTA.
1939.

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* "महर्षेः पूजितस्येह सर्वलोके महात्मनः ।
प्रवक्ष्यामि मतं कृत्स्नं व्यासस्यामिततेजसः ॥२३॥
आचख्युः कवयः केचित्संप्रत्याचक्षते परे ।
आख्यास्यन्ति तथैवान्ये इतिहासमिमं भुवि ॥२४॥"

The Mahabharata, Adi Parvan, Chap. I.
Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute Edition

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* These pictures are made after Razmnamah of the Emperor Akbar, which is now in the Maharaja's Library at Jaipur.

The other illustrations are specially made under the direction of the Author.

INTRODUCTION.

Vedartha Prakasa, Madhava Acharya's commentary on the Taittiriya Yajur Veda attributes the actual composition of the Mahabharata to the sage Vyasa and gives a remarkable reason for his having written it. All persons, including women and Sudras, must be competent students of the Veda in order that the depreciation of evil and the aspiration after good should be common to all men. It is said in the Santi Parvan and Astika Parvan that the Mahabharata was originally an interpretation of the Rig Veda and an adaptation of the Yajurveda, with its well-known sacrifices of the different schools of Black and White Yajus, by Vaisampayana and Yajnavalkya. Yajnavalkya was the preceptor and the chief minister of sacrifice, in preference to Vaisampayana, in the Court of Vaidehi Janaka, and he officiated in the Rajasuya sacrifice of Yudhisthira. Yoga philosophy is preached in the Santi Parvan by Yajnavalkya and Vyasa was its commentator. In that Santi Parvan mention is made of Kapila, and discussions of his Sankhya philosophy, as well as of Yoga, are found. The Rig Veda is concerned with the Gods, the Yajur Veda with the religious rites of men, and the Sama Veda with those of the Pitris. Brahma initiated the three Vedas from Fire, Air and the Sun for the complete performance of sacrifice. The sacred text of Gayatri is the essence of the triple Vedas. Divinely revealed knowledge in general is called Veda.* The epithet Vyasa is derived from the Sanskrit verb Vy-as meaning to dispose in regular sequence and may apply to any compiler. The Manu Samhita refers to the region of the growing Aryan settlements, not far from Indraprastha or Kurukshettra, described in the Mahabharata. "This tribe seems to have belonged to the Taittiriyakas, 'adherents of the Black Yajurveda', and their Mantras, Brahmana and Srauta Sutras are still extant, but their Grihya and Samayacarika Sutras appear to have perished. In all probability, too, many of the rules, as we have them presented to us, were simply theoretical, inserted to complete an ideal of what ought to constitute a perfect system of religious, ceremonial, moral

* Manu IV, p. 125.

political and social duties. Who the real compiler and promulgator of the Institutes was is not known." Human life was divided into four stages: (1) Religious student; (2) householder; (3) hermit; (4) religious mendicant. The filial piety of the Aryan Hindus is manifested in the offering of oblations to the *manes* of their forefathers, called Sraddhas, and the reading of the Mahabharata at that time is enjoined.

If the successive additions and alterations to the Mahabharata are analysed and separated then sufficient light will be thrown on the early history of India. The heroes and heroines of the Mahabharata all belong to the Lunar race of Kings; this is admitted by all; there were inter-marriages between the Solar and Lunar dynasties. The great Epic depicts an advanced state of society and civilisation.. Many detached stories interfere with the main plot of the Mahabharata, although attempts were made to connect them like the figures on a decorative frieze. The result has been that the leading incidents of the main plot are lost and there is hardly anything to connect together the vast mass of independent legend amidst the religious, moral, political and philosophical topics and precepts of different ages.

The Mahabharata, so far as the plot portion is concerned, cannot but be interesting. Chapter I, which deals with the contents of the present Mahabharata, is called Anukramanika. It gives out that the illustrious Vyasa originally composed the Bharata of 24,000 verses, excluding episodes where the greatness of the Kuru race, the goodness of the sons of Pandu and the evil conduct of the sons of Dhritarastra, the virtues of Gandhari, the constancy of Kunti, the wisdom of Vidura and the divinity of Sri Krishna are described.* This Bharata had a historical background: Jarasandha, the great and powerful King of Magadha, wanted to declare himself Emperor of India and he imprisoned many kings of India after defeating them in battle. They would have been offered as sacrifices at the great *yajna* of Siva, where he was to be declared Emperor; but Sri Krishna advised Yudhisthira to put a stop to this. Jarasandha was the father-in-law of Kangsa, the uncle of Sri Krishna, who wanted to kill Sri Krishna since he had been given to understand that he would be slain by him, an event which did actually transpire. Sri Krishna, after killing Kangsa, placed his father back on the throne and made Jarasandha raise the siege of Mathura which he had invested to avenge the

* Chapter I, verse 101.

death and defeat of Kangsa. Sri Krishna was not in favour of war and the decimation of large numbers of people. He carried out his object with strategy and political artistry. He founded an empire at Dwarka and was instrumental in the founding of Indraprastha, the capital of Yudhisthira, separate from the Kuru capital of Hastinapur. The death and defeat of Jarasandha was an illustration of Sri Krishna's divinity.* Jarasandha was undergoing a sort of religious observance in an impregnable fortress and there Sri Krishna, with Bhima and Arjuna, appeared in the guise of Brahmans and challenged him to a single combat. Jarasandha was astonished and took them to be divine beings; at last he was obliged to accept the wager and, fighting with Bhima in a hand-to-hand conflict, was killed. The imprisoned kings and princes of India were released after the victory of Bhima; and the great Rajasuya Yajna of Yudhisthira at Indraprastha was conceived. Sisupala, the King of Chedi and a cousin of Sri Krishna, was a great admirer and friend of Jarasandha who had wanted to marry Rukmini, the renowned spouse of Sri Krishna, to Sisupala; but Sri Krishna, at the earnest entreaty of his beloved lady, carried her away by force and married her, as was then the custom prevailing amongst the Kshatriyas. This embittered their relationship, and at the great sacrifice of Yudhisthira it culminated in open enmity and a challenge to fight before the great assembly of kings. Sisupala paid the debt of Nature, and Sri Krishna was worshipped as God by the assembled monarchs, and he received there the highest place of honour. This was described by the poet Magh and goes by his name, and was accepted as a Mahakavya.† The Mahabharata is described as a kavya (verse 72, Chapter I, Anukramanika). It deals with the domestic Asrama; the three other Asramas were not considered to be equal to it. Here Ganesha is remembered. The birth of Kartick, the fruit of love between Uma and Mahesvar, became the theme of the Mahabharata, for he was born to achieve the death of the demon Tarak.‡ The birth of Bharata is the outcome of the love episode of Sakuntala, which made Kalidasa a world-renowned dramatist; his Kumarsambhava became a Mahakavya. The history of the great birth of the Bharata princes is called the Mahabharata.§ The etymology of the name of Bharata cleanses the knower of all his sins.**

* Mahabharata, Chapter I, verses 99 and 100.
† Macdonnell's History of Sanskrit Literature, pp. 229.
‡ Mahabharata, Chapter LXII, verse 34.
§ Ibid, verse 39.
** Ibid, verse 31.

Verse 53 says that whatever there is to be found about Dharma, Artha and Kama in the Bharata may be met elsewhere, but that whatever is not in it, is not to be found anywhere.

The Mahabharata assumed the position of a Purana in Chapter I, verse 16, and of a history of success, called Yaya, in the 20th verse of the same. It demonstrates the theory of the Manu Samhita—the rules of conduct by which a king shall achieve the highest success—*vide* Chapter VII. This is at the root of the Yaya history of the Purana, as is disclosed in verses 40-42. Vena, Nahusa, Sudasa, Yavani, Sumukha and Nimi were the Kings destroyed through pride, and kings like Prithu and Manu regained their kingdoms through humility. Likewise Kuvera, the lord of wealth, and Viswamitra attained the status of Brahmanas. In the Pouranic Mahabharata instances of this nature are found. In the Manu Samhita (Chapter IV, verse 47) vehement stress is laid on three things which can be done only once, *viz*. (1) The partition of the estate; (2) the marriage of a girl; (3) the making of a gift. The historic Mahabharata is built upon this. Dhritarastra, the old blind king, divided the paternal estate between the Kurus and the Pandavas and the latter established themselves at Indraprastha. The Rajasuya Yajna was performed and Yudhisthira was declared the Emperor of India and the Kurus participated along with the other kings of India. The Rajasuya and Aswamedha Yajna are referred to indirectly in the Manu Samhita (Chapter VII, verse 201). Durjodhana and other kings and princes of India, seeing the good fortune of the Pandavas, were filled with jealousy. The illustrious Vyasa's Bharata naturally ends with the Rajasuya Yajna, where the divinity of the great Krishna was discovered and declared and where he was worshipped by the Emperor at the head of the assembled Indian kings. It is clearly mentioned in the Anukramanika (Chapter I, verse 92) that the poets of India drew their inspirations from the great Epic. Thus the poet Magha described the death of Sisupala after the writing of Vyasa's historic Mahabharata.

The punishment of death in the great war is spoken of in the Pouranic Mahabharata in terms of the Manu Samhita (Chapter VII, verses 22-27). The famous Yayati Gatha is found in the Manu Samhita (Chapter II, verse 94). The ten vices originating from hunting excursions, dice games, intoxication, calumny, etc., mentioned in the Manu Samhita (Chapter VII, verse 47), are demonstrated in the Pouranic

Mahabharata. The conduct of Yudhisthira in leaving the empire in the hands of the Kurus was justified.* The declaration of Yudhisthira at the Rajasuya Yajna demonstrates the truth of the Manu Samhita (Chapter VI, verse 47) and his retirement to the forest was in accordance with the next verse. The great poet Bharavi composed the Kiratarjuniya in 18 cantos, which formed the nucleus of the story of the great war of Kurukshettra, where the deadly weapon of Pasupati was acquired by Arjuna in a combat with Siva (in the guise of a mountaineer or Kirata). It relates to the Pouranic Mahabharata.

The calumny relating to Kunti and the marriage of Draupadi with the five brothers and the birth of the Pandavas was the work of the Kurus in the dramatic Mahabharata. The dice play was the principal event to divest the Pandavas of their wealth and property and, what is more, Draupadi was persecuted in the worst fashion in the public assembly to feast the depraved imagination of idle folks. The fact that Dushashana could not unclothe Draupadi was utilised to prove the divinity of Sri Krishna. The Kurus were thus sadly disappointed. The marriage of Draupadi was not with the five Pandavas, for Draupadi was crowned as the queen of Yudhisthira. The gift of Draupadi could only be made once. The partition of the Estate could not be questioned. The corruption displayed in the game of Dice to rob the Pandavas of their wealth, kingdom and Draupadi was the theme of the dramatic Mahabharata. The Naishadhiya by Sriharsa in 22 cantos deals with the story of Nala and Damayanti, a well-known episode of the Mahabharata. It forms part of the dramatic Mahabharata.

The Bhagabata-Gita preaches the gospel of religion, philosophy and duty. It is said that the version of Sanjaya was written after the great battle for the old king, in order perhaps to console him, ascribing everything to the God Sri Krishna instead of to the great hero Arjuna. Sanjaya witnessed the great battle under the influence of Yoga philosophy into which he was initiated by the illustrious Vyasa. Bhisma's appearance in the Mahabharata with Drona and Kripa is an after-thought, for no mention is made of them in the Anukramanika. The Bhagabata-Gita is an epitome of the Hindu philosophy of religion preached, as it is, in the form of questions and answers between the ideal Narayana, Sri Krishna and Nara Arjuna (which name dates from a later age when Yudhisthira was made less important than Arjuna). Karna, the hero of the Suta

* Manu, verse 28.

community, was Arjuna's great rival and it became a matter of doubt who was the greater of the two; but in the Mahabharata the dual fight between Bhima and Durjodhana decided the ultimate victory. There are Puranas which decided that it was Siva who went before the great Bhima and killed his enemies. The Gita says it is Sri Krishna who does so. The Birata Murti is reflected in material activity in Nature and in the victory of virtue over vice as the ultimate result of the great battle of Kurukshettra. The divinity of Sri Krishna is preached in the Bhagabata-Gita in quite a different way from the Mahabharata. He is not an avatar of God in the Gita but the omnipotent and omnipresent God, reflected in the knowledge of the true philosophy of religion and in universal love, pervading the universe. The Bhagabata-Gita may be taken to be the essence of the Srimad-bhagavata and met the desideratum of the great Epic which did not deal with Bhakti and divine love, Prem, the *summum bonum* in the emancipation of the mortals on Earth below. The rigid forms of the sacrifices of the Vedas were cast aside before the cult of Bhakti and Prem in the Bhagavata by Suka.

The late Sir Monier Williams wrote in his book—Indian Wisdom:—" We need hardly, however, explain that these are merely ideal personages, introduced dramatically like Krishna in the Bhagabata-Gita; or rather perhaps are later additions, designed to give an air of antiquity and divine authority to the teaching of the Code."*

The Great Epic ultimately became the encyclopædia of everything worth knowing in India, be it kavya, drama, philosophy, etc.

In the Mahabharata the embodiment of virtue, Yudhisthira, was translated to Heaven in person, which the God Sri Krishna was not able to do. Here truth and morality have been placed on a higher level than the spiritual greatness of a God. Here it followed the Mahakavya, or the great epic of the East, part and parcel of which the Bhagabata-Gita can never be. The episodes of Nahusa and Yayati, etc., illustrate the system of future recompense for acts done in this life, *i.e.*, the consequences of acts good or bad as leading to reward in Heaven or punishment in various transmigrations or hells. The gift of a cow and the sacrifice of his own flesh to rescue a pigeon from the clutches of a hawk respectively enabled Nahusa and Sivi to go to Heaven. Examples of Buddhist scepticism are found in the Mahabharata which are all interpolations of later age.

* P. 215.

The current Mahabharata represents the reconstruction in the heroic dark age—out of the eighteen sections of the work the major portion relates to extraneous matters and the fight between King Virata and Durjodhana, and more than six sections relate to the preparations and the exploits of the defeated generals of the great war and of the civil war amongst the Yadavas. The work has been wholly transformed into a great tragedy.

The Anukramanika does not describe it as such. It is clearly said that the great Dwaipayana composed a holy Upanishad to restore peace to men's mind after the great battle of Kurukshettra, and it has been published by the learned bards in the Puranas. In it the eternal Vasudeva, the possessor of the six attributes, has been described.* He who understands its real meaning is freed from all sins. Fervent religious meditation (tapa), or study of the ordinances of the Vedas, or the acquisition of wealth by one's own exertion are not sins unless they are abused; then, and only then, do they become the sources of evil.†

The customs and manners of the Epic period show the great change from the Vedic age. The chief difference between the Vedic and the Epic periods lies in the greater refinement of manners, customs and culture. In the Epic age caste barriers were often ignored in practice—only, with the elaboration of religious ceremonial, the priesthood became more and more a special class. Hence a growth of the hereditary principle amongst the priesthood gradually developed; and they were at the head of the territorial states of the Indus and Gangetic valleys. For a long time the priesthood and the warrior class formed together the ruling class of India. The sages of the Rig Veda often served as warriors and lived amongst their kinsmen freely. The pedantic scholasticism of this priestly class treated the Vedas, the Brahmanas with the Aranyakas, and the Upanishads as revealed scriptures while the Sutras and the Puranas which belong to the rationalist and the Pouranic ages were not ordinarily held to be so. A sort of compromise was made in the case of the Mahabharata—the light it throws upon religion is great indeed but it was not primarily didactic, as it now appears to be. The present Mahabharata is of heterogeneous growth, containing, as it does, much material of a later age. The foundations of territorial kingdoms are evident from the various war sections of the present Mahabharata—

* Mahabharata, Chapter I, verses 250-253.
† Ibid, verses 271-272.

the original tribal communities of the Vedic Aryans, the Kurus and the Panchalas, were lost in the growth of the Yadavas and the Pandavas in Muttra and Indraprastha. Thus the great war forms the subject of the Epic—many nations of India formed a confederacy to oust the Pandavas from Indraprastha, their capital, and the Empire that they had built. The lengthy additions and alterations made to this old epic of Ancient India necessitated a sequel in the Harivansa and an addition in the Mahabharata, the Mausala Parvan, portraying the civil war amongst the Yadavas, their disappearance, and ending with the death of Sri Krishna and Balarama, a subject not mentioned in the Anukramanika or Index Chapter of the Mahabharata.

The real Mahabharata begins with Chapter LIX of the Adi Parvan, and the preceding Chapters are all additions of a later age.

The supplement, the Harivansa, seems to be a rather complete account, supposed to be recited by Vaishampayana, the accredited pupil of Vyasa, to Janmejoya, the great-grandson of Arjuna, at his horse sacrifice, but the Adi Parvan of the Mahabharata refers to the snake sacrifice of the said Janmejoya. The questions raised then were answered in the horse sacrifice. Consequently, there, a connecting link is found in the account of the great Epic and what the plot should be. The Chapter XLI is the index of the Mahabharata and is called Bharata Sutra in the colophon. No mention is made of Bhisma or Drona and no mention is made of the war sections. The Bhisma Parvan introduces the Bhagabata-Gita and is an addition of a later age.

Even in Chapter LXII, the enlarged index of the Mahabharata, where the important questions of King Janmejoya were put to Vaisampayana, whose answers formed the subject matter of the real Mahabharata, no mention is made of the great generals Bhisma, Drona, etc. The Mahabharata begins in the next Chapter with the history of the King of Chedi, Uparichara Basuhoma, and ends with the defeat and death of his descendant, the illustrious King of Chedi, Jarasandha.

The Mahabharata begins with a change of worship and offerings in sacrifice. Narayana was worshipped and, in place of the flesh of animals, various kinds of grains were introduced by the sage Vasistha in the reign of the King Uparichara Basuhoma of the Chedi kingdom. The various kinds of grains, with the flesh of fishes, were introduced in place of animal flesh, as the staple diet of the people.

Hardly a less interesting subject is the position of women—they were free and cultured, and absolute seclusion was unknown. They were the guides and philosophers of their husbands. The Royal Courts were the centres of learning and the Kings were the great patrons of the cultured people in their Kingdoms. The reign of law and order was the chief feature of good administration, and it was for the preservation of this that war used to be declared.

The original Mahabharata of Vyasa or Vaisampayana, passed from mouth to mouth, was lost and became the property of rhapsodists and court bards as a tale with which to amuse the audiences at royal functions. Many zealots objected to the introduction of the war incidents into the sacred text, but unfortunately their protests went unheeded and ultimately they were forced to yield to practical necessity. It thus became a war panegyric. The traditional exposition of the Mahabharata, based on theological and sacrificial material was lost, while the story of the great war of Kurukshettra became the most prominent feature of the work, complete with fictitious generals of immortal fame to whet the appetites of the audiences.

Much too often the two great Indian Epics, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, are confused by the scholars of to-day, with the result that conclusions reached in connection with the one are influenced by those reached in connection with the other. Their essential difference lies in the fact that the Ramayana confines itself to the deeds of one King, Rama Chandra of Ayodhya, whereas the Mahabharata has a much wider scope, covering the multilateral character of Hinduism under different phases of civilisation and illustrating the very origins of social, moral, religious and spiritual developments. The unbounded reverence of the Hindus for the Mahabharata, as a sacred book covering the whole mental life of Ancient India and of the Hindus, derives its sanction from the divine words of Narayana to Narada.

Many Sanskrit plays have been written, down to modern times, which have been derived from the Mahabharata; Bhattanarayan's Venisamhara, a play in six acts, though not conspicuous for poetic merit, has been a favourite owing to its expressed partiality for the cult of Krishna. Its action turns on the incident of Draupadi being dragged by the hair into the Kuru Court by Dushasana, a brother of Durjodhana.

Dr. Macdonell says: "The aim of the Indian dramatists is not to portray types of character, but individual persons; nor do they observe the rule of unity of time or place. They

are given to introducing a romantic and fabulous element."* He gave the date of the author of Venisamhara as circa 840 A.D.† He says that ten of the eighteen sections of the Mahabharata are referred to in Kumarila Vatta's Tantra Varttika. The great Vedantist philosopher Sankaracharya wrote in his commentary in 804 A.D. quoting the Mahabharata as a smriti, and, in discussing a verse from its Book XII, expressly stated that it was intended for the religious instruction of those classes who could not study the Vedas and the Vedanta‡ The final reconstruction of the Mahabharata in its present form must have been before 800 A.D.; and the survey of contents (Anukramanika) and the synopsis of sections introduced the names of Bhisma, Drona and Kripa and the great war.§ It will be seen in the synopsis of sections (Parvan Sangraha, 2nd Chapter, Adi Parvan) that, from Bhisma Parvan to Anusasana Parvan, Bhisma was the principal figure with his friends and coadjutors, Drona and Kripa. It is a great digression from the main theme. It is said clearly, in verses 35 and 36 of the same, that the three sections Paushya, Paulama and Astika, at the beginning of the great work, contain many wonderful speeches, descriptions and examples of self-denial which should be studied and known; for life among things that are dear is sweet, but men desirous of final emancipation can only make absolute renunciation (Vairagya). Again it is said in verses 40 and 41 that this history displays the highest knowledge, that the outlines of the various Chapters of this Bharata history are full of subtle meaning and logical conclusions and are rich with interpretations of the Vedas. These references remove all doubts about the true state of things—what the original Mahabharata of Vyasa and Vaisampayana was and should be and not what it is now found to be.

* History of Sanskrit Literature, p. 350.
† Ibid. p. 366.
‡ Ibid. p. 289.
§ Mahabharata, Chapter I, verse 138.



THE READING OF THE MAHABHARATA AT SOUNAK'S UNIVERSITY.

GENESIS OF THE PLOT.

The works of Vyasa and Valmiki were meant to give a better tone to religion and to some characteristics of Hindu Society. The subject matter of the two epics has been under criticism from age to age. The revisers have changed the ideal characters with the growth of society and civilisation. Aspects of the national life and forms of worship could not remain the same for ever. Whatever our authors composed was not for any particular person or section of people, their compositions were so comprehensive that they expressed the thoughts and experiences of a whole nation, as it developed with the progress of time. Anybody and everybody, whether literate or illiterate, used to rely upon them. Thus the works of Vyasa and Valmiki may be said to have sheltered the people of the country like a great banyan tree. The greatness, beauty and special merits of their heroes and heroines were enhanced by the skilful pen of poets like Kalidasa in his Sakuntala and Kumarasambhaba.

If the Ramayana and the Mahabharata be only called Epic poems, that designation will not truly reveal their real characteristics. They are religious ordinances as well as histories of actual incidences. Religious practices, prayers and resolutions are embodied in them. Rama Chandra was not an Avatar, but was a prince—if he had been described as a God instead, it would have been detrimental to the sublime character of the Epic. The character of Rama was so dignified that Valmiki recognised in him the true hero for whom he was searching. He asked the divine sage Narada to enumerate the qualities of a hero: " Who is the man whom the Goddess Lakshmi upholds with her support?" Narada said: " I do not find a single person so well qualified even amongst the Gods. Listen to me about Rama who has got all those qualities."

In the Ramayana, the Gods have not come down as men, but men, by dint of their virtues, have become Gods. To establish the highest ideal of a man the learned men of India composed the great Epic poems, and from time immemorial the readers of India with a great reverence have been reading the

descriptions of these ideals as expressed by their heroes. The conquering of a country, the subduing of enemies, and the dissension between two powerful parties are the sources of action and excitement in the Epic poems. In no other country have personal matters—generally family affairs—become the subject matter of Epic poems. It does not merely help us so much to understand the poet himself as it helps men to know what India was like then. One can very well understand the real significance of family life and of household duties to Indians in early times. It proves how lofty was the ideal of family life. Life was then not meant for anyone's personal pleasure or happiness but was as a sacred duty which was to be a reality and not a fictitious ideal. This may be called the foundation of the ancient Aryan civilisation of India. It would not have been possible for men to look upon these characters with great reverence, if the subject matter of the Epics had been imaginary and if it had not dealt with family affairs. The conception of the Mahabharata is grander than that of the Ramayana —it is not confined to one single hero and heroine like Rama and Sita.

Vyasa made morality wholly independent of scriptural enactments and of any theological forecast of future happiness or agony in Heaven or Hell. He sought for the root of religion in feeling, not in a system of dry and barren rulings of divines; and he founded ethics on the nature and ability of men and women to realise the worth in the actions of others and to associate moral conceptions with delicacy and beauty. He set forth religion as the crown of virtue. There is one Supreme Creator who rules the universe by certain truths or divine laws. Worship consists naturally in obeying those laws. The poet based his theology on a comprehensive test of human knowledge. Deism was not a marked logical development from anything that had gone before, but was always current and had strongly influenced political developments of the past. Curiosity was more powerful than blind faith. The revolutions in India owed their continual successes to the advice of clever priests like Kasyapa, Vasistha, Viswamitra, Atri and Brihaspati. These were the five original "Gotra" makers who each bore the name "Father of Deism." They were deposed by the six philosophers of India who laid down the main lines of religious controversies, and whose teaching afterwards in various forms continued to be the backbone of deistic systems in India. Men became weary of all these contentions. Religious wars had made peaceful thinkers seek to take the edge off dogmatical

rancour and to check the untoward growth of the epicurean theory of Charvaka, which provoked distrust of the common basis on which all dogmas were founded. This was the religious war waged on the famous plain of Kurukshettra. The doctrines of the Trinity and the Incarnation culminated in the Bhakti (beatitude or salvation) cult. The demand seemed to have created the supply. The symbols of the Trinity by themselves were too compendious and needed exposition. Atheistical doctrines were denounced in the first three sections of the Mahabharata, as is apparent in the victory of the symbol of Garuda, of the Vaisnavas in their attack upon the worship of Indra and Siva (Serpent and Bull are the symbols of Siva), and in the introduction by Upamanyu of the worship of the Aswinikumars (sons of the Sun). Vasistha and Kapila were the fathers of the Vaisnava cult—" Faith leadeth unto God; reasoning far away." Mercy and abstention from slaughter in royal sacrifices was the essence of the highest virtue. Basuhoma's story, illustrating this, was the opening theme of the Mahabharata, in which the God Narayana was worshipped (at the time of the Pandavas) and was only subsequently replaced by Krishna-worship in later days. Krishna manifested himself for the benefit of mankind as a whole when there developed the heretical tendency of the Kshatryas to defy Brahminical rule in India. The feet of Bhrigu was the emblem on Krishna's breast. Indra is said to be the elder brother of Vishnu. Brahma, Vishnu and Siva are the triple impersonations of God. In the Satapatha Brahmana we have the Vedic triad of Agni, Indra, Vayu and Surya. In the Mahabharata Agni was identified as Siva and is cursed by Bhrigu in the Poulama Parvan. Siva was said to be the guardian of cattle. The favourite attendant of the God Siva is the sacred Bull (Nandi); Siva is symbolized in the phallic emblem (the symbol of generative power). In the Mahabharata Krishna is said to have offered worship to Siva for his son Sāmba and the sage Parasara for Vyasa. Pushan and Pusapati seemed to be identical; and this God was invoked as the bestower of food, wealth, etc., and was believed to be a solar deity. He is jointly mentioned with Soma as the progenitor of Heaven and Earth and is connected with the marriage ceremony. The Poulama Parvan refers to the marriage curse on Agni as well as to the curse which Bhrigu also laid on the Himalayas for not giving his daughter to him; as another suitor, he was in rivalry with Siva (*vide* Santi Parvan). In the marriage ceremony Siva is asked to lead the bride to the bridegroom and make her prosperous (Sivatama). The boon of Siva is mentioned in

Draupadi's marriage. The male gods were supplemented by a female triad: Saraswati, Lakshmi and Uma. The retinue of Indra consisted of the Gandharvas, celestial musicians, and their wives, the Apsaras, lovely nymphs often employed by the Gods above to dissuade pious sages to give up austerities and religious fervour. Narada was the divine messenger between Gods and men as well as between men and their departed ancestors. It was the sacred duty to worship God as their forefathers, something in the nature of a triad of three generations. It was believed that the souls of departed ancestors acted as guardian angels to their descendants. The Mahabharata says that God is worshipped through this medium. This is called Pitriyana worship. The performances of sacrifices, or Fire worship, is called Devayana worship. It was then believed that fire was the mouth of all deities.

Religion is a sort of discipline and the consequent progress of the soul towards perfection. Vyasa revealed in his work the dawn of a great development in the spiritual life of mankind as well as in the history of religion. The sacred books of all religions made their stands very cautiously, but with an outspoken fearlessness against atheism. The authors of the sacred books were distinguished by their wide scholarship, and they were philosophers. They embodied in their works few truths that were not accepted by the majority of the learned men then existing, who were destined to leave their marks on subsequent theological thought. Thus was the Mahabharata the compendium of all religious and philosophical thought of Ancient India.

The Ramayana is more or less a heroic poem, showing the brotherly love and devotion of Bharata and Lakshman, as well as the faithfulness of a loving wife, Sita, and the sacrifice of a King's life for the sake of truth; but the Mahabharata relates to the whole of this great India. Its eighteen sections or Parvans relate to the different aspects of the old Aryan family of kings, priests, merchants, trade guilds and peasants of India in Hindu Society as a whole. The four orders of the ancient caste system of India can trace their origins to this ancient epic. The Ramayana deals with Brahmanism to a greater extent than the Mahabharata. To understand the real significance of the plot embodied in the Mahabharata it was found necessary to provide a short sketch of the gradual development of Hindu Society, as it then existed. The first Parvan or section describes the educational institutions

in India where the boys were taught; and from them the kings obtained their priests, paying the fees of the students when departing to their teachers. Religious instruction formed the special feature there. The observations of King Soudasa (Pousya) to Utamka are significant. The Brahmins were ungrateful to the King for his benefactions to them. The usurpation of the priesthood by the Kshatriya King Viswamitra and his contests with Vasistha came into prominence. Sakti, the son of Vasistha and grandfather of Vyasa, was killed. The sacrifice, intended by Parasara to avenge this wrong, was not carried into effect owing to the intervention of the benevolent sages. Utamka worshipped Nagas, Siva and Indra, and subsequently he was converted into a Vaisnava by Sri Krishna, according to the Asvamedha Parvan. This is the theme of the first Parvan. After this introduction the prologue is found in the story of Supratika and Vibhabasu the two brothers degraded to animal lives, on account of their mutual animosity. The fight did not end in the next life even, for Garuda, the great and powerful attendant of Vishnu, took possession of them; but then they came to their senses and sought refuge in the great God Narayana, the shelter of mankind, who rescued them from their earthly prisons in the bodies of animals.

It is evident from this what was the chief aim and object of the Great Epic and its plot—it was nothing but the emancipation of the soul, and not its transmigration. Heaven and Hell are not distinct places in the Universe, but exist in the human mind and nowhere else. The Indian Epics, the religious books and the poets said so, and yet the notion that they have concrete form has a strong hold in the minds of the general public. It was said that the great hero of the Mahabharata, Yudhisthira, went to Heaven in person, which no one else could do. There was the novelty of the Mahabharata on the question of reward and punishment in the after-life after the Day of Judgment.

Yama, the great dispenser of justice, was brought to his senses by the sage Animandaba for inflicting heavy punishment for the trivial offence of hurting an insect. He was cursed and came to earth as Vidura, the minister of Dhritarastra, his half-brother; and Yudhisthira was the wielder of justice upon earth. All these read like a romance but no! this is a philosophical demonstration. In Hindu philosophy there are three elements of which primordial matter is said to be composed—Satya, Raja and Tama. They were represented in Vidura, Pandu and Dhritarastra. Bidura was Satya and Minister, Pandu was Raja

and King, and Dhritarastra was Tama and blind. Vidura was poor, a friend of the good and of the country and a true and capable minister who never played the game of holding with the hare and running with the hounds. His loyalty was not lip-service but sincere. He was an ideal and devoted Minister of State. Pandu was an ideal King who redeemed the past glory of his forefathers by his conquests and retired to the forest, placing the kingdom in the hands of Vidura and his blind elder brother, who had been deprived of his inheritance by reason of his physical disqualification. In those days in order to be blessed with good and great offspring one had to practise asceticism, like Pratipa, or perform sacrifices, like Dasaratha and Bharata. The Pandavas were born in the wood and were brought up by the sages. Pandu with his wives retired to the forest, his mind dwelling on abstract things as he was anxious to train his soul and bless his children with proper education which would be of great use in future life. That the education of a boy begins thirty years before he is born, is a well-known adage and the true implication is not far to seek. The educated father must be a fitting example to his son. The sort of life that is full of enjoyments cannot be healthy for a King and his kingdom. A King is the observed of all observers and has to fulfil certain conditions before he can command the sympathy, love and admiration of his subjects as well as those of other Kings. The Gods and Kings offer fitting examples to the nation to be an earnest seeker after the three qualities Satya, Raja and Tama, so that its equilibrium be not lost.

Vyasa was a vedic scholar and a philosopher. Vidura, Pandu and Dhritarastra were his creations, and he was justly regarded as their Godfather. The plot of the Mahabharata centred round their descendants in accordance with the prologue, mentioned before.

In the Astika Parvan, Chapter XIII, Verses 6-7, Souti says that the Brahmanas call this history, recited by Krishna Dwaipayana, a Purana to the Dwellers of Naimisharanya: "This was learnt by my father Lomaharshana, a disciple of Vyasa, as requested by the Brahmanas." Lomaharshana, belonging to the Suta race (son of a Kshatriya by a Brahmin), was entrusted with the task of reciting Puranas before an assembly of sages and kings. Astika, son of Jaratkaru, stopped the snake sacrifice of King Janmejoya and was regarded as the great orthodox reformer of the age. In the Astika Parvan, Chapter XIII, Jaratkaru was advised by his ancestors to beget offspring by marriage;

they were suffering great misery, with their heads hanging down in a great hole and their feet held upwards by a rope of the Birana fibre which was being eaten by the rats that lived secretly near this hole.* The sages Balakhilyas adopted this form of asceticism. In the Puranas the birth of a son is necessary, if not imperative for the emancipation of the human soul; the Astika Parvan proves it beyond the shadow of a doubt. The births of Rama and his three brothers in the Ramayana and those of the Pandavas bear this out clearly; but the hundred sons of Dhritarastra showed just the contrary. Dhritarastra had to undertake asceticism for his own emancipation after the death of his children. Yudhisthira, as the name implies, was probably of commanding stature, imposing presence and firm in the battlefield. There is no real hero kept always in view like Rama in the Ramayana—the chivalry of the age was represented in different forms in the Pandavas and were known by various names in the Mahabharata. Arjuna rose as the standard of perfection, matchless in arms, brave, generous, refined, affectionate and human. The Pouranic conception of the Mahabharata begins with the Samvaba Parvan, when the Gods came from Heaven with Vishnu Narayana in his incarnation for the welfare of the world.†

The Puranas were originally the history of the Gods themselves, connected with a variety of legendary traditions on other subjects, just as the Vana Parvan signifies the old traditional story. Vyasa was the great compiler of these old traditional stories in the eighteen Puranas. The Mahabharata does not form part of these Puranas, although the great Epic presents a complete circle of post-vedic mythology including many myths which have their germ in the Veda.

According to the Markandeya Purana the five Pandavas were all portions of Indra, and yet four of them were said to have been sons of other Gods. Indra killed the son of Tvashtri and, in consequence of this sin of Brahmahatya, his Tejas (manly vigour) left him and entered Dharma, the God of justice. The son of Tvashtri was reproduced as the demon Vrita, and he again was killed by Indra and as a punishment for this his Tejas went to Maruta (the wind). When Indra violated Ahalya, the beautiful wife of Gautama, his beauty went to Asvins. When Dharma, Maruta and Asvins gave back what they took from the great King of the Gods, Indra, Yudhisthira, Bhima, Nakula and Sahadeva were born. Arjuna was born as half the essence of

* Mahabharata, Chapter XIII, verses 15, 16.
† Ibid, Chapter LXV.

Indra. As they were all portions of one deity, Indra, there could be no harm in Draupadi becoming the wife of all five. This was the sort of esoteric explanation given about the birth of the Pandavas and their marriage with Draupadi. On the birth of the three sons of Pandu by Kunti, Yudhisthira, Bhima and Arjuna, heavenly voices were heard proclaiming their future glory. Such things had not happened at the birth of the twin brothers, Nakula and Sahadeva, by Madri, another wife of Pandu.

The question of the acquisition of merit by good works and conduct is raised in the ascent to Heaven and the descent from it of Nahusa and Yajati, the Nestors of the Lunar dynasty. Chyavana, a great sage of the Bhrigus, sent King Nahusa to Heaven for his liberality and good conduct, but he was thrown down, when he became arrogant and could not control his senses, by the curse of Bhrigu in collaboration with Agastya. Nahusa was transformed into a snake and was not released till Yudhisthira appeared before him and admonished him, teaching him the essence of a virtuous kingly life.

Nahusa's son, Yajati, enjoyed the world to his heart's content and gave away his only daughter Madhabi to Galava to be married to four Kings of India; when a child had been born to each king in turn the payments enabled Galava to pay the fee of his preceptor, Viswamitra. Madhabi did not marry any of these Kings but, after the birth of the fourth male child, she practised Yoga in the wood. Her sons were instrumental in saving Yajati from his fall from Heaven. Yajati went to Heaven by his gifts and as the fruit of his asceticism. The fall of the eight Vasus from Heaven for not observing the due ceremonies of good society to Vasistha and their emancipation of the Ganges, is connected with the story of Mahavisha who cast an evil eye on the Ganges in the court of Indra in Heaven. Mahavisha was born as Santanu, famous King of the Kurus, and Bhisma was one of the Vasus not released from earth. Pratipa begot Santanu by the fruits of asceticism, and Pandu similarly begot the Pandavas in the forest. The Pandavas were presented at the Kuru Court by the sages where they lived after the death of their father. The characters of the five Pandavas are drawn with much skill and maintained with great consistency throughout the plot.

The dramatic transformation of the Mahabharata begins with the Duta Parvan. The great Vyasa was asked by Yudhisthira if, by the fall of the King of Chedi, the future difficulties about the peace and prosperity of the kingdom would be overcome

or not. The answer was in the nature of a prophecy used in the Puranas; and the plot was full of poetic imagination woven round the person of an Emperor whose position, and that of the Pandavas, was acquired by glorious feats of arms. The performance of Rajasuya and Aswamedha Yajnas in those days was the significant ceremony in declaring an Emperor of India who was approved of and acknowledged by the powerful and learned sages and their followers, the provincial heads of the great Empire.

PART ONE—HISTORY

PART ONE—HISTORY.

CHAPTER I.

The Divine Order of Saints and Dutiful Kings.

The health of society depends not merely on the creed or dogma which one class of society professes, not even on the wisdom and holiness of a few saints, but on the faith and virtue of the leaders of thought and action in each age. Man's life is but a shadow of that which is Infinite and Everlasting, and he is called the "Image of God." In Hindu creation the first man and woman did not dwell in Heaven, nor had they the privilege of seeing God and talking with Him, nor were they hurled down to perdition for disobedience. Satan was not a dissatisfied angel of Heaven. The mere sight of God cannot render a man worthy of being called the "Image of God." Mere awe cannot make him that spiritual entity worthy of being so called. It is culture which brings to light the inner self, and only in that inner self is the likeness to God to be found.

There is a great hidden divine purpose in the whole system of creation and the work of creation is maintained through the male and female species. One poet says:—"Society, friendship and love are divinely bestowed upon Man," and another, "God moulded man to his own cherished will and form in which he could descend, and so man is called the Image of God." Woman was the last and best of all created beings to continue the work of creation with the help of man. The success of creation depends on the works of men and women in this universe.

In Hindu philosophy God is not directly concerned in the works of creation. He is only present in spirit. God is above all human conception. He who says "I know God" is as. ignorant of Him as he who says "I know Him not." That is the finding of the authors of the Upanishads of ancient India. It is not blind faith in the prophet of religion, in God and His Son, nor is it a sacrifice to gain some end upon which ultimate success in the sphere of real happiness rests, but upon the response of the heart and the spirit within the vast universe.

One must realise the greatness of God in His universal love as displayed in creation, as unselfish as the services of parents in the animal kingdom. Hindus, therefore, think that between God and man there can be no resemblance.

In the Mahabharata, Santi Parvan, CCXLI, Sounaka says:—

"Sanak, Sanatan, Sananda, Sanatkumar, Sanatsujata, Sana and Kapil; Marichi, Atri, Angira, Pulaha, Pulastya, Kratu and Vasistha were the Adams of the Hindu Genesis. They were created by a fiat of the will of the Almighty Father. The first seven followed the path of Renunciation and the others that of Action. The former were the Guardian Angels of human creation, while the latter were the pioneers of Aryan civilisation. The former, the faithful and beloved few who, in order to redeem the world, renounced it by the total extinction of all sensual instincts through austere practices, awaiting re-union with the Supreme Being; while the latter, preaching and practising the doctrines, rites and observances of the Vedas, living in dark, solitary caves or under overspreading boughs, taking nothing but roots, pulps and fruits for their bare sustenance, were absorbed in deep meditation and yearning after eternal communion with God.

Their vow they took not from any feeling of discontent, driving them to penitence; but from youth to age they grew in sincerity of heart and faith. They looked down upon rich food and drink as a dishonourable corruption of the body. It was self-immolation which their stern duty enjoined; it was prayer which could give solace to their earnest hearts, and it was devotion and study in which their minds delighted to be absorbed. Their sobriety, devotion and piety made them the emblems of Divine Grace. Hail, Holy names! to inspire man with moral courage, to ensure success in this world, to secure victory over vice and the vicious—the cravings of the flesh and the blood. Such was the order to which they belonged—till luxury, wealth and presumption raised up against them mighty enemies. As long as self-restraint was practised and honoured by man the gates of heaven were not inaccessible.

Arms or descent invested a person with a kingdom, learning and sacred ceremony created the priesthood. Of the two, the latter were of greater consequence. The development of society and religion depended entirely on their conduct. It was they who were left to educate the young, to create and develop in them a taste for the beauty and sublimity in nature and to provide them against trials and persecutions with that true

friend, an unerring conscience, which would soothe them in misfortune and pave the way to future happiness. In short, they awoke in their students that latent benevolence and sympathy which is the fountainhead of human greatness. They alone had the master key to open to the ears of infancy the treasure house of pure and permanent joy, by teaching them to look upon the universe not as the abode of human cares and fleeting joys but as the temple of the loving God, wherein prayers were due and service and ceremonies were to be performed for the creation of faith, universal love and sympathy.

It was not mere scholarship which invested them with the authority of priesthood; they produced sermons and ceremonies, based on the tenets of religion, and holiness to wean the human heart from its depravity, and by refining the tastes through the extraordinary powers of culture they added new charms to every rational pleasure. The splendid exertions of their genius secured for them and their descendants a perpetuity of fame and reverence which could only die with the death of the religion they so greatly dignified and made sublime. It was this religion which so greatly influenced the Princes of Ancient India, making them the *beau ideal* of Hindu society, purifying their enjoyments on earth and preparing them for a paradise without a serpent, wherein the tree of immortality flourishes. Such lives were the guiding stars of the age. Their radiance pierced the gloom and shadow of death, leading distressed travellers along the right path through the mighty maze of life that they might sing the glories of God in their gratitude.

The priests, by their sound advice, were the chief counsellors and guides of the kings of ancient India, and they made the latter observe their duties. So long as such an alliance continued, defeat and anarchy failed to overtake the kingdom, for the priest was capable even of wresting the sceptre from the hands of God. Take the example of King Mochukunda, who, having conquered all the kingdoms of the earth, turned his attention to defeating the Lord of Wealth, Kuvera, who, however, created a large army of demons and destroyed the army of Mochukunda. At this misfortune the King importuned his minister and priest, Vasistha, to remove those illusions and kill his enemies. Against this fresh opposition Kuvera found his attempts futile and saw his hosts melting away. He addressed his adversary thus: "Many kings of yore, more powerful than yourself, never approached me like you. They gratified me with adorations, knowing me as the fountainhead of wealth and woe. Display

the might of your arms. Why should you have recourse to Brahmanic power?".

The King replied: "I don't see how you can find fault with me. I am following the eternal practice. The self-created Brahma endowed the Brahman with the power of self-control and the Kshatriya with the might of arms to defend the Brahmans."

"Rule then this universe," replied Kuvera.

"Certainly not," was the answer. "I desire not to enjoy the sovereignty of the world at their charity. I only care to enjoy the fruit of my own labour and exertion."

Not finding Mochukunda wanting in his duties, the God of Wealth retired, saying, "Gods can never be partial to anybody. Truly the crown is not the gift of the Gods but is the meed of duty." (Shanti Parvan, Chap. IXXIV.)

At yet another time a Brahman enquired from the great Vasistha which was of greater consequence, Destiny or Exertion? The great sage showed him that as a good harvest depends equally on human exertion and the rains, so success is unattainable unless one exerts oneself to follow one's destiny. As a spark of fire can be fanned into flame by the wind alone, so destiny, helped by exertion, becomes great. Destiny, alone, breeds idleness. Good and evil appear through works and not through destiny. Virtue is the refuge of the Gods and by it everything is acquired. The Brahman acquires prosperity by holy living, a Kshatriya by prowess, a Vaisya by exertion and a Sudra by service. These are the duties which, when followed righteously, secure salvation. (Anusashan Parvan, Chap. VI.)

The seven sages Atri, Bharadwaj Gautama, Kasyap, Viswamitra, Jamadagni and Vasistha, with his wife Arundhati, her maid-servant Ganda and her husband Pashusakha, found entrance into heaven through energy, which their stern duty enjoined, and not by destiny. This was how it happened. The son of Brishhadarva gave to these seven progenitors of the Vaivaswata Manwantara (æon) his son as a present at a sacrifice. A severe drought took place and the prince died of starvation. The sages, afflicted with hunger, began to cook the dead body to save their lives. The king met them on his way and called upon them to accept his presents of wealth, grains and country and desist from thus using the body. They were offended and refused to accept anything as a gift and went away to the woods in search of food, leaving the body. The king sent his officers with a present of figs for their acceptance,

but even these were refused as the figs were weighted with gold. They refused the gifts as they valued their own welfare as greater than anything else. They knew that all the objects in the world could not satisfy the desire of a single man, and that trying to make them do so merely kindled desire all the more. They would much rather control desire than inflame it by accepting the offer.

The king felt insulted and, in order to bring ruin upon them, invoked the aid of a fiend named Jatudhani to accomplish his end. The sages were surprised to find a mendicant, quite fat and plump, wandering in the forest with a dog, while they were starving. He formed acquaintance with them by touching their hands, as was the practice then. Bitter were their complaints of the pangs of hunger. Together they left that place and ere long saw a beautiful lake filled with radiant lotuses. Aquatic birds were sporting there. There was but one path leading to it and Jatudhani was mounting guard over it. The sages begged of her to allow them to take away the stalks of the lotuses as they were very hungry. She allowed them to do so on each mentioning his name.

"There was hardly a night passed when I did not study the Vedas, and for that I was called Atri." The foremost of householders and not ignorant of Yoga was Vasistha. He who protected his body by penances was Kasyapa. The supporter of sons and disciples and all was Bharadwaj. He who dispelled the darkness of the world by his self-control and knowledge was Gautama. The friend of the universe was Viswamitra. He who owed his origin to the sacrificial fires of the celestials was Jamadagni. Arundhati received her name for her staunch adherence to her husband.

All of them mentioned their names and explained the meaning thereof, but the fat mendicant simply mentioned his name and would not explain it. When she failed to realise the meaning of his name, he cursed her with his sticks to be converted into ashes. Meanwhile the sages, joyfully collecting a large number of stalks, placed them on the ground and went again to the lake to offer oblations to the departed *manes*. When they came back they found to their great disappointment that the provisions they had gathered had disappeared. Cruel thoughts of suspicion first entered their hearts and did its worst. They swore, protesting their innocence, till at last they found out by this means that it was the work of the fat mendicant. The curse he swore was a veritable blessing, and by that he

was caught. Shunnasakha, the fat mendicant, said: "Ye sinless ones, I came to test you and protect you as well. That woman of dreadful disposition, conjured up at the instance of Brishadarva, was killed by me as she would have taken your lives. O learned Brahmans, I now disclose myself before you; see, I am Indra. As you are free from the degenerating influence of cupidity, now rise from this place and go to those regions of beatitude where desire shall chastise you no more. No sooner do you rise than your aim is fulfilled." They then ascended to the celestial regions in company with the King of Gods himself.

Those great persons, who shed lustre sitting by the empyrean throne of heaven, preach the gospel of truth—that without self-denial none may ascend to heaven. Though worn out with such a hunger as would make them accept even a dead body and tempted with offers of various articles of enjoyment to relieve their distress, yet they swerved not from the path of duty and rectitude and found heaven espousing their cause. Duty, not descent nor destiny, crowns the man with heaven and prosperity.

"Pearls lie hid on the ocean bed, gold and jewels in the bowels of the earth." Poverty is no crime, but ignorance is a veritable curse. Man is no man at all if he has no sense of duty and religion. Circumstances are the rulers of the weak, but they are surely the weapons of the wise. There is nothing either good or bad but that thinking makes it so. The possession or pursuit of riches or distinctions can hardly confer any real enjoyment if the mind be left untrained and uncultured and desires unrestrained. Peace of mind does not necessarily depend upon the acquisition of worldly possessions. It is incomparably the most valuable of all our possessions. It is within the reach of all who diligently seek after it. There must needs be a feeling that one is fulfilling his duties to the best of his powers to satisfy his conscience. Improvement gives a true value to all blessings. What a fine show does a pious man make; the influence of such an example is above all calculation. He is a light that cannot be hid and gives light to all that are in the house. Such was the service of the priests. They laid society under the greatest of obligations and were justly regarded to have issued from the very mouth of the Almighty, to speak His words as it were, and were honoured as Brahmans. What the Apostles were to the Christians the Brahmans were to the Hindus!

In the beginning all used to live peacefully till clashing interests made it impossible. It then became necessary to lay down conditions for the preservation of order. The principles of righteousness were first enunciated by the Hindu Witanagemot (assembly of wise men) till pride, the goddess of prosperity, wrought wanton ravages, giving rise to ambition and fights for power and glory. In the interests of mankind the election of a king was a matter of necessity to protect both the rich and poor of his realm. A king is the observed of all observers and righteousness incarnate on earth. He can, by his own example, by rewarding the good and punishing the wicked, put a healthy restraint on the intemperate habits of mankind, and can attain to the dignity of a God and be the maker of an age.

John Bright, in one of his speeches in America, avowed that to his mind nothing was more worthy of reverence and obedience and nothing more sacred than the authority of the freely chosen Magistrate of a great and free people. If there be on earth and amongst men any right to govern surely it rests with a ruler thus chosen and appointed. Such was the case with the choice of kings in the early days of Hindu civilisation. Had it not been so, the illustrious sages could hardly have succeeded in killing so powerful a despot as King Vena and have raised his son Prithi to the throne on being sworn to the duties of a king. Prithi was the first to receive the name of king (Rajan), fulfilling all the duties of an ideal king by inimitable conduct. He passed by the name of Kshatriya, healer of the wounds of the Brahmans. He adored the Brahmans. All the important offices of the kingdom were filled by them. The great Shukra was his priest, the Balakillyas his ministers, the Saraswats his companions, and the great illustrious Garga his astrologer. During his régime the earth became celebrated for the practice of virtue and received the name of Prithivi after him. He encouraged civilisation by making free gifts of land amongst his subjects, levelled the surface of the earth, discovered gems, pearls and other precious stones and made the lower animals work for the benefit of man. His good acts led people to ascribe divinity to him, and, thenceforth, to the noble race of kings. He forbade inter-marriages, which prevailed during his father's reign. He paid due homage to the learning, wisdom and sacred life of the Brahmans, and declared to the world that the Brahmans were exempt from all punishments. It is evident from this that every effort was made to improve their newly-gained vantage-ground by impressing the lay community

with awe for them and surrounding everything connected with their order with a halo of sanctity. This concession, coming as it did from a king, involved an acknowledgment of their order as a divine institution. The first conception of a constitutional monarch, who reigns but does not govern, was materialised in Prithu.

The value of the inheritance of a good name cannot be overrated. Hence it was that the revival of a particular line of kings was looked upon with greater respect than anything else. It is, indeed, like the goodwill of an old firm which has a great value in the markets of the world. Under its auspices success is easy, and it takes little time to win the golden opinions of the world. The examples of his worthy predecessors influence the person to keep intact their high ideals, lest he should be held up to shame and obloquy. The very qualities with which his predecessors were endued are no longer looked upon as something foreign, but even as his own, with which he can hardly part company. Such is the value of a good name only. But what would it be to serve under the very man who contributed so largely to the making of that name!

Not for nothing are the sacred names of Kings Nala and Yudhisthira, Sita and Janardana recited every morning by every pious Hindu, male or female, in every household even now. The Mahabharata, as it exists, makes a clear and definite statement about itself in one of many similar passages, that "this collection of all sacred texts, in which the greatness of the Brahmans and cows (the wealth of the world then) is exalted, must be listened to by the virtuous men. In it are to be found the accounts of celestials, royal sages, the holy and renegade saints, the sinless Keshava (Krishna), the history of the Kurus and God of Gods, Siva and Durga, with the birth of Kartick, who had many mothers." (Adi Parvan, LXII. 31-35.)

The greatest monarch of all countries has passed through trials and persecutions and made the world what it is. In short, self-control is a very necessary and essential quality in a king, who has to think of the world and protect it, and for it sometimes he has to sacrifice even his own existence. Think of Him then who reigns in the Heaven of Heavens!

He who trusts in God and resigns himself entirely in his hour of trial receives inspiration from above; may be the messenger of God favours him with a visit and gives instructions. Dhruba and Pralhada received such visits from Narada, and from him they learned the ways which led them to salvation. It was so

in the history of every religion of the world, and it was so with the Pandavas. · O Religion! and its interpreter!

"Bright lamp of God, that men would joy in thy pure light."

A king who has to assume the different attributes of Gods, according to the circumstances necessary for the fulfilment of religious success in the country he governs, is said to have been made out of the spirits of Gods like Indra, Yama (God of wind and water), Varuna, Fire, Sun, Moon and Kuvera (God of riches) in order that his energies can overwhelm all the creations he will be called upon to rule. A king is the fountain head of reward and punishment in his realm, for his subjects are chiefly dominated in their actions by the fear of punishment and the hope of reward. Kings and even minor Gods are moved by the fear of the Divine retribution of Justice. Many kings with their families have been destroyed through arrogance and cupidity, like Vena, Nahusa, Sudasa, Yavani, Sumukha and Nimi, while Manu*, Prithi and Kuvera got kingdoms through their humility. The Kshatriya king, Viswamitra, obtained the status of a Brahman through humility. A king has to learn the three vedas, sciences of reasoning, self-knowledge, and political economy, with the principles of punishment and reward. The Mahabharata opens with the account of King Nahusa and his son Yajati, who went to Heaven, fell, and were restored by their children to their former positions.

* Manu, Chapter VII.

Chapter II.

The Vedic Sacrifice and God Narayana.

In almost all countries of the world a prophet has preached religion and acquainted the public with the name of God. But not in India. The Vedic sacrifices became the all-important institutions, at which illustrious kings and sages met and decided who would be the King of Kings and God of Gods, to receive the homage of all in the kingdom. The Mahabharata begins with an account of such a sacrifice performed by a king named Basuhoma of Magadha, who traced his descent from the family of Bharata kings. At his royal sacrifices there arose a dispute between the Brahmans and the Gods as to the form of oblation, whether it should be of animals or of corn. The king was cursed for unjustly deciding in favour of the Gods against the decision of the Brahmans and was sent to the nether regions. Ultimately he was restored to his former state when he turned from animal sacrifice and Indra and agreed to worship God Narayana with corn (Santi Parvan, CCCXXXVII, p. 538). The true implication of this may be that Basuhoma founded his empire through his own energy—the gift of God, as distinct from that of the Brahmans; and in time, the sense of justice, honour and duty ran uppermost in his family. Narayana worship was thus established.

Basuhoma began the worship of the King of Gods—Energy—instead of the Brahmans. This marked the era of the decline of the Brahmanical hierarchy. Thenceforth he was known to the world as Uparichara. Kshatriyas offer oblations to the manes (spirits of the dead) of their illustrious ancestors on their anniversary day, with the flesh of animals killed by their own hand in hunting expeditions. Uparichara scrupulously observed this custom, held so sacred. Once in the season of spring, while roaming in the beautiful forests in quest of prey, his senses swooned at the sight of the nymph Adrike. In due time she brought forth a son and a daughter, whom she abandoned in the river. They finally fell into the hands of a fisherman. Greatly impressed with their beautiful features, he presented them to the King. It did not take the intelligent

King long to find out who they were, but for fear of unhappy disclosures he commanded the fisherman to tell a fictitious tale regarding their birth. He kept the boy with him and named him Matsya, as he was said to have come out of the belly of a fish. The child became the founder of the great Matsya Dynasty. But the King refused to take the girl and made her over to the fisherman. The girl was the celebrated Matsyagandha or Satyabati.

The birth of Basuhoma is an interesting incident of the Mahabharata. Yajati belonged to the Lunar Dynasty and considered it a great honour when Galab approached him for eight hundred beautiful horses—named by his preceptor as his honorarium—in preference to the Kings of the Solar Dynasty, who were richer than the king in question. Yajati expressed his regret at not being sufficiently rich to provide him with those horses, but asked him to accept his daughter Madhabi for the purpose. She would give birth to four sons and perpetuate four lines, and thus he would get the horses in return as a dowry from the kings. The girl informed the Brahman that she had been blessed with a boon by a being, conversant with Brahma, that she would be a virgin again after the birth of each child, and therefore by her going to four kings his object would be accomplished. He acted accordingly. Harjyasva of the Solar Dynasty, King of Ajodhya, and King Divadas of the Bhojas, and Ushinara were thus approached and each was blessed with a son, and Galab got six hundred horses. Viswamitra was offered those six hundred horses, and the girl to make up for the rest. He gladly accepted them, and would have been satisfied had the girl been brought to him in the first instance so that he would have had four sons to perpetuate his line. Astaka was born to Viswamitra by the girl. Madhabi was then sent to her father and Galab retired.

Yajati retired to a hermitage at the confluence of the Ganges and Jumna. Puru and Yadu brought their sister Madhabi before their father, followed by a large number of kings and sages anxious for the hand of the girl, but the girl retired into the forest and did not marry any one. The four sons she brought forth were all famous kings of their time and saved Yajati from hell, as did his daughter Madhabi's religious fervour. It is said that Madhabi transformed herself into a deer and roamed about at will.

Basumana, son of Harjyasva, Pratardana, son of Divadas, Sibi, son of Ushinara, and Astaka, son of Viswamitra, were all

famous. They worshipped their mother when they met her before their grandfather Yajati. Yajati was unwilling to go to heaven by accepting gifts from these grandsons whom he could not recognise till they were introduced by his daughter. Basumana was famous for charity and mercy, Pratardana for heroism, Sibi for virtue and truth and Astaka for sacrificial rites.

Men were then virtuous and passion could not overtake them. They did not fight for a woman. As soon as a son was born to a man he was satisfied. Kings, the observed of all observers, married for this purpose and even they did not consider it objectionable. Even the sage Viswamitra, who was previously a king, did not find any impropriety in it. Marriage is an essential of evolution. " The death of some and the marriage of others," says Cowper, " make a new world of it every thirty years."

There were two distinguished lines of kings in India, the Solar and Lunar. They were not descended from the sun or moon, but were the followers of distinct forms of worship called Devayana and Pitriyana, respectively. King Basuhoma was famous for establishing the form of worship to Indra, the Vedic God, by hoisting a flag in his honour. His priest was Brihaspati. He could fly and was called Uparichara. The book of the seven sages was prepared under his patronage and formed the basis of the Mahabharata and Ramayana. The Ramayana records the glorious campaign of the great king Rama Chandra against Ravan, the powerful demon ruler of Ceylon. The Mahabharata is not primarily a record of the exploits of the illustrious kings of the Lunar (Bharata) Dynasty but is a compendium of all necessary knowledge for sages, kings and the general public about the past history, geography, philosophy, science, custom and law of ancient India. The fight between the Brahmans and the Kshatriyas began in the days of Vena and was continued from then. " Censure is the tax a man pays to the public for being eminent. It is a folly for an eminent man to think of escaping it and a weakness to be affected by it. All the illustrious persons of antiquity, and indeed of every age in thé world, have passed through fiery persecution. It is a kind of concomitant to greatness, as satires and invectives were an essential part of a Roman triumph." Nahusa usurped the vacant throne of Heaven on the death of the demon Britta and was converted into a snake by the curse of the Brahman sages, Agastya and Sukra, for his misconduct.

Amongst the priests the fight between Vasistha and Viswamitra was conspicuous. Parasurama, one of their order, to avenge the death of his father, conquered the whole earth and almost exterminated the Kshatriya race, to which the king of India belonged. Noted for the use of arms were all his disciples. It was a time when all information was given orally. The princes and the sons of the sages learnt their lessons side by side, in sylvan walks or in the cool, rustic shade of lonely cottages. The curious and wistful learners attended courses of lectures that presented to their view the stars, the moon, the beasts, the birds, plants and flowers, the wide family of Nature, the beneficence and power of God and the mystic and spiritual history of man. They acquired knowledge in the natural way. The refinement of a graceful mind and happy manners is very contagious. So these preceptors played not an unimportant part in guiding the destinies of the kings of India in those days.

The souls of the holy saints, who founded the order, were disturbed even in the enjoyment of Paradise itself on seeing the sins and follies of their unworthy successors. It presaged, no doubt, the advent of the Dark Age or the Kali Yuga.

The Ramayana and the Mahabharata were books of religion to preach the greatness of God Narayana and the suppression of tyranny and misconduct with an even hand.

Who is not aware how difficult it is to maintain the spirit of devotion unimpaired or to preserve in due form and delicacy those vital moral impressions, the quick perception of good and the instinctive abhorrence of evil, that form the chief characteristics of a pure and elevated mind, amid the corrupting examples with which the world abounds? These, like the morning dew, are easily brushed off in the collisions of worldly interests, or evaporate with the rising sun. Hence the necessity of retirement; when the mind may recover its scattered powers and renew its strength by devout application to the fountain of all graces. Women are but toys that amuse men's lighter hours, but glory and duty enjoin a true prince to forsake the pleasures of the world.

At every moment of our lives natural instinct tells us to do one thing, while conscience and reason ask us to do another. Constant and strenuous effort is as necessary as the right environment to keep one's feet from straying off the true path. A man trained to respond to the calls of duty soon does so with ease and alacrity, just as the blacksmith's arms or the ballet-dancer's legs acquire vigour and strength by exercise. " Man is man,

and master of his fate." Noble men and women, the stirring examples of gifted Nature, who guide the destiny of the world to higher things, are the salt of the earth.

Everyone comes into the world to do certain things, and relation with the world makes it imperative to accomplish them before all thought of seeking salvation. By begetting children the Creator is respected, by self-culture and sacrifices Heaven is sanctified, by study and meditation sages are adored, and by humanity and kindness the soul is advanced. He who had no children was impressed with the idea that unless he was blessed with them he would remain a debtor to his forefathers. His heart, as it were, failed to realise the meaning of filial love and how it could transcend to God. How could he feel that love which the Creator feels for him? How could he adore Him with His just dues and due reverence? Abstemious habits, not total abstinence, were all that an ideal man was required to observe. Convinced of this, he asked his wives to observe vows to beget children. Distinct gods were invoked, in consultation with the sages, with proper ceremonies to achieve success. This used to be the case with the ancient kings of India. This is known as Pitriyana. The great Ram Chandra and his brothers were born after the performance of a sacrifice, not by their family priest Vasistha but by Rishyasringa, a Brahman sage of Bengal who married King Dasaratha's daughter, Santa. This is known as Devayana. The sacrifice performed was under the auspices of the Atharva Veda.

The fight for the crown dates back almost to the time of its creation. It brought in its train internecine quarrels which hurled India into the depths of slavery. Had the kings lived peacefully, or cared to look beyond the dominions of their brethren and countrymen, had they not wasted their time and energy in wresting their crown from their own brothers' hands or in dividing their paternal estate, they could easily have extended their empire all over the earth. The Throne is really the apple of discord in the universe.

Truly Bacon said: "In aspiring to the throne of power, the angels transgressed and fell; in presuming to come within the oracle of knowledge, man transgressed and fell: but in the pursuit towards the similitude of God's goodness and love neither man nor spirit ever have transgressed or shall transgress."

Jeremy Taylor rightly describes conscience as "a clock which, in one man, strikes aloud and gives warning; in another, the

hand poists silently to the figure, but strikes not. Meantime, hours pass away, and death hastens, and after death comes judgment." Conscience distinguishes the rational from the animal creation. Where there is no responsibility, there can be no conscience. It is a moral feeling that a man has regarding his own actions or his judgment about others' actions. It depends entirely upon knowledge and culture. Even a beast respects its mother and plays with its brother, crying for their company when alone. It looks up to its parents for its food and learns to eat from them. A beast has no conscience, it fights for its food and kills any animal its parents teach it to kill.

"Conscience is called the Household Guardian, the Domestic God, the Spirit or Angel of the place; and when we call God to witness, we only mean that our own conscience is right, and that God and God's vicar, our conscience, know it." The voice within has in it a restraint, a force more powerful than a thousand gibbets. If that voice is dead in any King and in his kingdom, it may truly be called a blind man's rule. It is a fearful state when conscience is seared and dead. Conscience gives pleasure to the mind, as it respects practice and is the source of all real pleasure that can afford solid refreshment to the soul within. Pleasure does not live in the appetite or in its satisfaction. Every morsel to a satisfied hunger is but a fresh labour to a tired digestion. How indiscernible is the transition from one to the other, and a load of trouble and oppression only follows when the bounds are over-stepped.

The tendency to produce this fearful state of things owes its origin to a disregard for religion. Religion is a pleasure to the mind, as it respects practice and so sustains conscience. The discourse between Mr. Mallet and a thief is an appropriate explanation.

"What tempted you to commit the robbery?" asked Mr. Mallet.

"I have heard you so often talk of the impossibility of a future state, and after death there was no reward for virtue, nor punishment for vice, that I was tempted to commit the robbery," was the stern reply of his attendant.

"Well, but you rascal," replied Mr. Mallet, "had you no fear of the gallows?"

"Sir," said the fellow, looking sternly at his master, "what is that to you, if I had a mind to venture that? You had removed my greatest terror; why should I fear the least?"

But in the case of King Dhritarastra and his son there was neither fear of the gallows nor of after-life, as they were the rulers of the land and had no respect for religion or law.

Without culture and regulation man is worse than a beast. A man can invent mischief which a beast cannot do. By an artifice he can kill a powerful enemy, but a beast has to depend upon its own strength, and cannot think of a fight with its superior but submits without a fight. This is the secret history of man's heartlessness and crime, before his natural tendencies were checked by religion and culture, and last though not least, good company.

The Glory of God is thus in righteousness reflected. One cannot really enjoy Heaven unless one is above pain or pleasure, which follow in rotation and are thus more painful. In a word, he who can control himself; whom hunger, cupidity, lust or ambition cannot disturb; who can think for others and not for himself, like God, who created this universe for the enjoyment of his created beings and not for himself; who is always eager and at work for others' well-being and exults for others' good; he only can be in Heaven in flesh and blood. Such a sage is Narada, the divine minstrel of Heaven! He appears to all who are pious, when they are in distress. Narada is regarded as the messenger of God to the good and beloved on the earth below. Even Narada, it is said, had to pass through the ordeal of passionate love before he became a divine minstrel.

The ancient sages married the daughters of Kings and Kings married those of the sages. There was then no question of Varnasankar or mixed caste. The father of the great Parasurama married the daughter of a Kshatriya King, but she could not adapt herself to hermitage life as did Lopamudra, a princess, the wife of Agastya. The result was that Parasurama executed his mother under the order of his father; but the son of Goutama did not do this in the case of his mother Ahalya. These Kshatriya and Brahman intermarriages did not prove any too successful and happy. All these marriages were stopped when the climax was reached in the marriage of the famous King Yajati. Devajani and Sarmistha were the daughters, respectively, of Sukra, the great priest of the Asuras, and the Asura King Brishaparva. The girls before marriage were great friends, but fell out as a result of the overbearing conduct of Devajani. Sarmistha took this greatly to heart and, without forethought, threw Devajani into a well, stark naked, in a burst of childish temper. Little did she know

that King Yajati was out on a hunting expedition and would be drawn to the well by her friend's cries. Yajati rescued Devajani and gave her the clothes lying there to clothe herself properly. The result was that Yajati was married to her with her father's consent. Sukra went to King Brishparva, his attached disciple, and asked him to punish his daughter Sarmistha properly. The King left it to his priest. The great Sukra, without due forethought, told the King to let Sarmistha become the maid of honour to his daughter Devajani. The beauty and good graces of Sarmistha induced the King to marry her secretly. When the proud Devajani came to know of it, the quarrel began which continued between their children. Subsequently these marriages were stopped and the story of the curse of Kacha was invented to justify such a marriage in a later period. The curse of Sukra on King Yajati was likewise a myth, for when a wife is cantankerous she is a sort of disease itself which is called Jara. King Yajati declared against the law of primogeniture and the principle of succession to the throne to be observed in ancient India was as follows:—

Yajati said:—" Hear all of you of the four orders of the caste, with the Brahmanas at their head, why my kingdom should not be given to my eldest son. My commands were disobeyed by my eldest son. The opinion of the wise men is that the son who disobeys his father is no son at all. The son who obeys the commands of his father and mother, who is humble and a well-wisher of his parents and who loves them, is the best of sons. Puru is a great friend of mine and he did what was agreeable to me. The son who would obey me would become the King and the Lord of the earth. Therefore, I entreat you, let Puru be installed on the throne."

The People said:—" O King, it is true that the son who is accomplished and who seeks the good of his parents deserves all prosperity, though he is the youngest. Therefore, Puru, who has done good to you, deserves to have the kingdom."*

Human love is the stepping stone to Heavenly love. This is demonstrated in the Mahabharata in the love story of Devajani and Sarmistha with Yajati, and in the Srimadbhagabata by that of Urvasi with Pururava. These gave rise to the Yajati Gatha and the Aila Gita, respectively. The Yajati Gatha is given in Santi Parvan as follows:—

" There is a saying of old by King Yajati, and remembered,

* The Mahabharata Adi Parvan, Chap. LXXXV. Verses 23-25, 28, 29, 30 and 31, pp. 127.

O Sire, by all persons conversant with the Scriptures, dealing with Liberation. The effulgent ray exists in one's Soul and not anywhere else. It exists equally in all creatures. A man can see it himself if his heart be given to Yoga. When a person lives in such a way that another is not filled with fear on seeing him, and when a person is not himself filled with fear on seeing others, when a person ceases to cherish desire and malice, he is then said to attain to Brahma. When a person ceases to cherish a sinful attitude towards all creatures in thought, word, and deed, he is then said to attain to Brahma. By controlling the mind and the soul, by renouncing malice that stupefies the mind, and by throwing off desire and stupefaction, one is said to attain to Brahma. When a person assumes an equality of attitude about all objects of hearing and vision, as also about all living creatures, and gets over all pairs of opposites, he is then said to attain to Brahma. When a person regards impartially praise and dispraise, gold and iron, happiness and misery, heat and cold, good and evil, the agreeable and the disagreeable, life and death, he is then said to attain to Brahma. One following the duties of the mendicant order should restrain his senses and his mind, like a tortoise withdrawing its outstretched limbs. As a house covered with darkness is capable of being seen with the help of a lighted lamp, similarly can the soul be seen with the help of the lamp of understanding.*" No mathematical demonstration is necessary to prove that a father saves his son when he is in danger. If a man can love the adversary who wanted to take his life and pity his ignorance, he gets strength to suffer from his Archetype, the spirit above. The spiritual world is not the world of intellectual abstractions or of our own physical emotions formed out of impressions of pleasant, awful, inexplicable, beautiful or sublime things, which our eyes catch a glimpse of.

There can be little doubt that the original kernel of the Mahabharata has an historical background and illustrates by contrasting characters, the fourfold end of human existence, *viz.*, spiritual merit, wealth, pleasure, and salvation. The great Epics, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, depict different times, the Treta and Dwapara jugas, and virtue declined as these ages advanced.

A philosopher moulds man to the form of God. The inner qualities of man come into play as iron in contact with the fire expands and takes form and becomes sharp and useful to the

* The Mahabharata, Santi Parvan, Chap. CCCXXVII. Verses 32-41, pp. 518-19.

world. Exercise of self-control then becomes a matter of necessity, and by practice it becomes one's own property. Habit is second nature.

The implications of sacrifice and the worship of one God Narayana are described in the version of the great Sanat Kumar :—

"Men having scriptural learning cannot get God by such lore. Nor can He be acquired by Penances, nor by Sacrifices. Some one may be seen to purify himself in only one life by great efforts. Listen, by what means creatures attached to acts and those unattached to them get at the causes bringing on their respective states of mind. In all creatures it is He who lives as the mutable and the immutable. Know also that the qualities of Rajas, Tamas, and Satwa are of Him. He is the fruit of all the modes of life, and He it is who should be known as the fruit of all religious acts. The Highest and Immutable, He is also the fruit of abstention from all work. Duty is put in his heart. He is Brahma; He is the highest Righteousness· He is existent and He is non-existent. He is all the Sacrifices. Although the Ritwijas seem to see Him as separate, He is, however, known to them as one and the same. Know that the entire universe is under the control of one divine Being. The Veda that is in the soul, regards the unity of various creatures. When a living creature realizes this unity on account of true knowledge, he is then said to attain to Brahma.*"

God is no God, if He is not identified with His creation in love and spirit to make the whole thing divine. Similarly, a King and a priest or preceptor who cannot convert this vale of tears into the blissful regions of Heaven, cannot be said to represent the true ideals and traditions of those high posts in the ancient Indian Empire. Even the great Asura Kings Prahlada, Bali and Britta were staunch followers of Narayana, and different Avatars of Narayana are mentioned with each of them.

The question of God the Holy Ghost may be compared to the worship of God in sacrifices, God the Son in divine sages like Kapil and Vyasa, who were identified with God Narayana in the Indian Epics. That the son saves the father from hell is the Hindu idea, which, it would seem, the Christians adopted in Jesus Christ. God the Father is the most common thing in every religion of the world.

* The Mahabharata, Santi Parvan, Chap. CCLXXX. Verses 9-12, 17, 20, 24-25, 26-27, and 28-29, pp. 421-22.

Chapter III.

Family History of Kings.

The Indian Epics demonstrate the stern austerity of life in every sphere of action. Merit was more prized than the birth of a man or a woman. The names of the illustrious sages and kings of India are connected with the family names, lines of kings, names of places and histories of ancient India. Correct genealogies of various kings were not kept for the obvious reason that neither the king nor the priest succeeded to his respective position as his birthright. It was an age when every king or priest had to conform to certain rules of life before he could be called upon to occupy such an exalted position. The people then had a voice in these selections and nominations by the predecessor in office. The throne and the sacred post of a priest remained in a distinct family so long as the family could satisfy the world by producing dutiful and worthy children. The people got attached to them and the idea of heredity thus got a firm hold on Hindu sentiments. The Ramayana and the Mahabharata, the two Indian Epics, describe the exploits of the Solar and Lunar Dynasties of India—the former is concerned with Rama Chandra and the latter with the Pandavas and Sri Krishna. The hero of the Indian Epic had to foreswear every delight of life for the pleasure of dying a martyr to duty and glory. His motto seemed to have been that the Sword was his spouse and Duty his only aim in life. Only the names of such distinguished kings were mentioned in the Epics. In the Mahabharata the Lunar Dynasty was distinguished from time to time by a distinct appellation after a great king—for instance, Ailas, Pouravas, Bharatas, Kouravas and Pandavas after Kings Illa, Puru, Bharata, Kuru and Pandu. Illa was the son of Vaivaswata Manu and was transformed into a woman, either for a fault in the performance of a sacrifice or under the spell of the place where the son of Mahadeva, Kartick, was born. She recovered manliness through the boon of God Vishnu and was known by the name of Sudyumna. Sudyumna's son was Pururava, whose son was Ayu. Nahusa was Ayu's son. From Nahusa's son, Yajati, the families of the kings of Yadus, Kurus and Pandavas, as well as the Bharatas, were descended.

Bharata, the founder of the Bharata Dynasty, was the son of the well-known king Dushyanta and his queen Sakuntala. The story of their love was told by poet Kalidasa and is well-known. His descendants were ruling the kingdom from a capital at Allahabad, on the Ganges and the Jamuna. The illustrious Bharata race could not have risen so high in the estimation of all were it not for the fact that the founder gave ample proof of his love for duty; and his standard was very high. None loved duty better than Bharata, for who would sacrifice his own sons when they were found unworthy to succeed him to the throne? His very queens, the mothers who brought them forth, incensed at their worthlessness, did not hesitate to perform the cruel act of killing them. Women though they were, and full of that milk of human kindness which designated them as mothers, they would not have gone so far unless they were impressed with the example of such sacrifices at the altar of duty. Nine sons they had, and not one of them was spared. Bharata then performed a great sacrifice with the help of Bharadwaj and received his reward. Bhumanyu was born, who fulfilled his father's wishes and succeeded him. His grandson Ajamida had many sons and was the progenitor of many clans. From his sons the Panchals, the Kurus and the Kushiks traced their descent. Riksha succeeded his father, while his brothers Dushyanta and Paramishti founded a distinct house in Panchala, etc. Riksha's son, Sambharan, the father of Kuru, had the misfortune of being defeated by the Panchals and was forced to take shelter in the forests of the Punjab. The great king begged of Vasistha to become his priest to regain his kingdom. Through the latter's good offices he not only recovered his lost possessions and declared himself the Emperor of India, but succeeded in marrying the beautiful Tapati, daughter of the Sun and younger sister of Savitri, whom all adore. Hasti founded Hastinapur on the western bank of the Ganges and made it his capital. His great-grandson was Kuru. He was the Nestor of his race and lent his name to the line. He performed many sacrifices on the tract of land between the upper courses of the Ganges and the Jamuna, northwards of Delhi, which was covered with dense forests. It was first known as Kurujangala after him, and afterwards became famous as Kurukshettra. The Kurus were frequently spoken of along with the Panchals, who had settled to the east of the Ganges and a little southward, as a highly civilized and gifted people. Generations had not sufficed to blend the hostile blood, though

they were of the same race. The one still felt the elation of a triumph, while the other groaned under the evil consequences of a defeat. On the plains of Kurukshettra were fought many a desperate battle during the civil wars of these races, and they were haunted of yore by the cruel monsters Sanda and Upasanda, who added their own internecine quarrels. Here virtue decided the fates of battles fought, and hence it was called the Land of Virtue—" Dharmakshettra."

In the Mahabharata the names of Parikshit and Janmejoya occur more than once. King Puru's son was Janmejoya I, and the great-grandson of King Kuru was Parikshit I. Bhimsena I, was the son of Parikshit. This Bhimsena's son was Pratisraba, who was the father of King Pratip. Devapi, Santanu and Valhika were the three sons of Pratip. The birth of Santanu and his name itself seem to be rather mysterious, but before dealing with them it is better to mention the history of the family as told by King Dhritarastra in Udyoga Parva, Chapter CXLIX:—

" The grandfather of my father, conversant with all virtues, Pratipa, the ruler of the universe and known in the three worlds, that lion among the rulers of the earth, while ruling his kingdom, virtuously had born to him three sons of renown, having the attributes of the gods. Of them Devapi was the foremost (eldest) and then came Valhika and the third Santanu, the wise man, was my grandfather. Devapi, that best among kings, though endowed with great energy, had a defect in his skin; but he was a virtuous man, a speaker of truth and ever devoted to attending on his father. Devapi was honoured by all the subjects and citizens and respected by the good; and he was loved by all—the old and the young. He was benevolent, attached to truth and devoted to the good of all creatures, and ever obeyed the command of his father, as also of the Brahmanas. He was the dear brother of Valhika and also of the great-souled Santanu; in fact, among all those great-souled men excellent brotherly feelings existed. In course of time, that old king, the best among rulers of men, had all arrangements made for the installation (of his son) according to the holy books. That lord had all auspicious arrangements made, but the Brahmanas and the old men amongst the citizens, with the subjects of the province all dissuaded him from installing Devapi; and that ruler of men, having heard of the exclusion of his elder son from the installation, had his voice choked with tears and became sorrowful for his son. ' Though he was

benevolent, conversant with virtue, attached to truth, and loved by his subjects, yet he had a defect in his skin. The gods do not approve of that ruler of men who has a defect in his limbs.' So saying, those foremost among the twice-born dissuaded that foremost among the rulers of men. Devapi, too, who was defective of one limb, seeing that ruler of men with his heart pained and struck with grief for his son, dissuaded him from carrying out his intentions and went to the woods. Valhika, too, giving up his kingdom, established himself in the family of his maternal uncle, and abandoning his father and brother, he obtained a very wealthy kingdom. Being commanded by Valhika, Santanu, well known in this world, on the retirement of his father became the king in that kingdom. In the same way, I, though the eldest, was excluded from the kingdom after due reflection, owing to the defect in my eyes, in favour of Pandu, endowed with good understanding.*"

No mention was made of Bhisma or Bichitrabirya in the above account. The births of Santanu and Bhisma were connected with the previous lives of beings who were enjoying Heaven and fell, on being cursed for their immodest behaviour. No such thing was said of any one of this family before. King Pratip, it was said, was blessed with three children and went to practise austerities for them. It is rather curious that Ganga, who was likewise cursed, should have fallen in love with King Pratip when she was to marry Santanu. She was rejected and was told to wait for his son's birth. From this it would follow that Ganga was very much older than Santanu. The account of Santanu's birth according to the Harivansa is quite different.† Santanu is said to be the sea personified by the curse of Kasyapa, and Ganga, the wife of the sea, had to follow her husband. The story has a special significance in the curse of Kasyapa, whose regions were being flooded by the sea, which he cursed: " Stop there, thou shalt go no further;" such is the origin of the name " Santanu." Vasistha, the sage famous for his forbearance, got angry as the Vasus did not pay respect to him or because they stole his cow and he cursed them. The eight Vasus were born of the alliance of Santanu and Ganga; seven were released and the eighth was said to be Bhisma. This is also curious, for Vasistha told the Vasus that the one who was the real culprit would not be released as easily as the others, whereupon it was agreed that the one who

* The Mbh. Udvoga Parvan, Chapter CXLIX, verses 14-29, p. 205.
† Harivansa, Chapter III.

was made out of the 1/8th of each of the eight would not be released. Thus Bhisma should have been the ninth son instead of the eighth. However, the true implications seem to have been that Santanu erected a dam to prevent the sea and the river Ganga invading the hermitages of Kasyapa and others, and was renowned for building sanatoriums there for sick people. It was for this reason that he was credited with removing disease by the touch of his hand and rejuvenating men—one of the causes of his name "Santanu." The lexicon-like Prakritivada gives the name of Santanu as "Mahabhisma," which tallies with the name "Mahabhis" of his previous life. The romance did not stop there. Satyabati, the forlorn daughter of Basuhoma, was married to King Santanu through the good offices of his so-called son Bhisma—a procedure quite unknown in the social history of India. Yajati called upon his son to take his infirmities, which was shown to mean something else. This match-making by Bhisma, taken with his sacrifice of his claim to the throne, was quite novel, having regard to the customs of ancient India mentioned before. The throne was not the gift of a son nor a father but the just merit of a legitimate prince, with the sanction of the people and their leaders, was essential to win it.

In the first Hindu creation man and woman were born at the fiat of the will of the Omnipotent Father. They were born without a birth pang and it was indeed a beautiful conception. The theory of evolution is marked in the birth of Kartick, son of Siva and Parvati, described thus in Shalya Parvan, Chapter XLIV :—

"In days of yore the vital seed of Maheshwara dropped into a blazing fire. The consumer of everything, the worshipful Agni, could not burn that indestructible seed. On the other hand, the carrier of sacrificial libations, for that seed became possessed of great energy and splendour. He could not bear within himself that powerful seed. At the behest of Brahma, the lord Agni, approaching the river Ganga, threw into her that divine seed, effulgent like the Sun. Ganga also, unable to hold it, threw it on the beautiful breast of Himavat, adored of the celestials. Thereupon Agni's son began to grow there, overpowering all the worlds by his energy. Meanwhile the six Krittikas saw that child of fiery splendour. Seeing that powerful lord, that great son of Agni, lying on a clump of reeds, all the six Krittikas, who wanted to have a son, cried aloud, saying—'This child is mine! this child is mine!' Under-

THE FALL OF THE GANGES AT THE CONFLUENCE OF JAMUNA AND SARASWATI.

standing the feelings of those six mothers, the worshipful lord Skanda sucked the breasts of all, having assumed six mouths. Beholding that power of the child, the Krittikas, those beautiful goddesses, were stricken with wonder. And because the adorable child had been thrown by the river Ganga upon the summit of Himavat, that mountain looked beautiful, having, O delighter of the Kurus, been transformed into gold. With that growing child the whole Earth became beautiful, and it was therefore that mountains produced gold. Possessed of great energy, the child passed by the name of Kartikeya. At first he had been called by the name of Gangeya. He was endowed with high ascetic powers. Possessed of self-restraint, asceticism and great energy, the child grew up into a person of highly charming features, like Soma himself. Highly beautiful, the child lay on that excellent and golden clump of reeds, worshipped and lauded by Gandharvas and ascetics. Thousands of celestial girls, of very handsome features, accomplished in celestial music and dance, lauded him and danced before him. The best of all rivers, *viz.*, Ganga, waited upon that god. The earth also, assuming great beauty, held the child on her lap. The celestial priest Vrihaspati performed the usual rites consequent upon the birth of that child. The Vedas, assuming a fourfold form, approached the child with clasped hands. The science of arms, with its four divisions, and all the weapons, as also all kinds of arrows, came to him. Gifted with great strength and great ascetic power, the child proceeded before that lord of the gods, *viz.*, Mahadeva, armed with trident and Pinaka. Seeing the child coming, the thought entered the mind of Shiva, that of Himavat's daughter and that of Ganga and of Agni, as to whom amongst the four the child would first approach for honouring him or her. Each of them thought,—'He will come to me.' Understanding the desire of each of those four, he had recourse to his Yoga powers and assumed simultaneously four different forms. The worshipful and powerful lord assumed those four forms in an instant. The three forms that stood behind were Shakra, Vishakha and Naigameya. Having divided himself into four forms, he went towards the four that sat expecting him. The wonderful form called Skanda proceeded to where Rudra was sitting. Vishakha went where the divine daughter of Himavat was. The adorable Shakra, which is Kartikeya's airy form, went towards Agni. Naigameya, that child of fiery splendour, went before Ganga. All those four forms, of similar appearance,

were highly effulgent. The four forms went calmly to the four gods and goddesses. It was indeed wonderful. Then Rudra, Agni and the goddess Uma and Ganga, all bowed unto Brahma, that lord of the universe. They said these words, O king, from desire of doing good unto Kartikeya :—' O Lord of the gods, for the sake of our happiness you should give this youth some kind of sovereignty that may suit him and that he may desire.' Having thought for a moment, the grandfather, always seeking the well-being of the celestials, conferred upon him the dignity of a generalissimo among all creatures. Then the gods headed by Brahma, taking that youth with them, came in a body to Himavat. The site selected by them was the bank of the sacred and divine Saraswati, that foremost of rivers, taking her rise from Himavat, which is celebrated over the three worlds by the name of Samantapanchaka.* "

This is Hindu mythology, and the birth of Bhisma may be compared with it. Bhisma was a mythological character. What Kartick was to the gods above, Bhisma was to the Kurus below. Bhisma was born in the Kuru and Pandu mythology and not in the history of those races. That was why the name of Bhisma was not mentioned by Dhritarastra. It may not be out of place to mention here that Soma, the progenitor from whom the Lunar line started, performed the Rajasuya sacrifice and Atri officiated as his high priest. After this sacrifice a great battle took place between the Devas and the Asuras under the leaderships of Kartick and Taraka, a great Asura. Kartick slew Taraka and became victorious. The birth of Kartick has a distinct bearing on the family history of the Kings to which the Mahabharata refers. Bhisma was said to have been engaged in a battle with his great preceptor Parasurama over the question of the match-making of the son of King Santanu, Bichitrabirya, and came out victorious in the field of Kurukshettra. But it is quite inexplicable how Chitrangada, another son of King Santanu, who was very chivalrous, was killed in the same field by a Gandharva king of that name, and nothing was heard of Bhisma's prowess on that occasion. The fight of Bhisma with Parasurama cannot be believed on the ground of anachronism. Bhisma was a fictitious character of the Mahabharata of a later age, which wanted to place the ideal character of a dutiful son before the easy-going princes of India to whom the strict principle of discipline and hard life of

* The Mbh. Shalya Parvan, Chapter XLIV, verses 6-22, 32-39, 41-43 and 47-50.

Brahmacharya might not appeal. Boundless intemperance untimely emptied the throne of Bichitrabirya, prized so much in those days, and for which the ideal man Bhisma, it was said, not only gave up his right of succession but sacrificed the pleasures of the world. He did not lead the true life of an anchorite but was treated as the protector of the Kuru family. It was said that the line of the Kurus became extinct, which is in direct contradiction of the boon of Sakuntala* from the illustrious Vedic sage Kanwa, mentioned in the Adi Parvan and the Harivansa Bhabisya Parvan.

Kanwa said:—"O beautiful child, I am prepared to bless him for your sake. But O blessed girl, receive from me the boon you desire to have." Vaishampayana said:—"Thereupon, Sakuntala, moved with the desire to do good to Dushyanta, asked the boon that Paurava kings should be ever virtuous, and never be deprived of their thrones.†"

"The world may be without the Sun, the Moon and the Stars, but not without a Puru.‡" In these words the great sage Yajati says that the Puru family would not be extinct.

The line of Puru was not extinct and could not have been revived by the illustrious Vyasa, nor was Vyasa the son of Satyabati as the result of an illicit connection with the sage Parasara when not married. These were interpolations of the worst nature with the object of crying shame on the well-known Hindu institute-makers by calumnising them. Likewise, the birth of Karna, a Suta champion and adversary of Arjuna, was set up as the fruit of Kunti's illicit connection before marriage with the Sun, a God whose worship was introduced by the Vedic sage Yajnavalkya. The enemies of the Pandavas foisted the story of Madhabi upon the births of the virtuous Pandavas. Kunti is there mentioned as Madhabi (Adi Parvan, Chap. CL, Sloka, 6), and in Chapter 124, Udjoga Parvan (Slokas 31 and 32), it is said that the sons of Dhritarastra traduced the births of the Pandavas, yet the latter were not angry, being virtuous and not vindictive, and treated them with generosity. These were the words of Sri Krishna at the court of Dhritarastra in favour of the Pandavas and against the conduct of Dhritarastra's son. King Pandu married the daughter of the Yadab chief, Sur, father of Basudeb, whom Kuntibhoj adopted as her own daughter. Kunti was famous for the matchless beauty of her person and

* The Mbh. Adi Parvan, Chapter LXXIII, verses 33 and 34, p. 106.
† The Mbh. Adi Parvan, Chapter LXXIII, verses 33 and 34, p. 106.
‡ Harivansa, Chapter CLXXXV (183).

as an educated and accomplished lady of her time. Kunti and Sri Krishna were very closely related. The sons of Yadu and Drajhyu, who were sons of Yajati, were the Yadabas and the Bhojas.

A purpose runs in the births of men and events in this world, and he who can know it and turns it to good account is successful. God alone knows the use of the created beings, fruits, flowers, and vegetables, and the vast and innumerable things on earth below and in heaven above or in any other region unknown. He who approaches Him in this respect, is honoured next to Him, and in time people give him the throne of God in their heart of hearts. There is positive proof that the original epic of Vyasa grew to enormous size, and within it came to be included the doctrines of the followers of different gods and schools of philosophy, till at last it assumed the character of a Hindu encyclopedia of moral teaching, dealing with Dharma, Artha and Kama, and came to be known as the Mahabharata (I. 62). Distinct mention of Bharata and Mahabharata is found in Aswalayan Grihya Sutra, which proves no doubt that the present form grew up from the Bharata. The characters described therein are not imaginary, as in the Yajurvedas, the Kurus and the Panchals are said to have finally coalesced into a single people and, in the Kathaka, King Dhritarastra and Vaichitrabirya are mentioned as well-known persons.

Sri Rama Chandra, Harishchandra and Yudhisthira are the bright examples and illustrations of self-denial in the East. It is their lives which make the world believe that God made man after Him, and this archetype of man if it exists anywhere, must exist eternally in the pure and cultured mind, spiritually great, sublime, and capable of realising Him. Animosity, the froth of the head, often becomes venom when it reaches the heart. A righteous man is as averse to abetting tyranny and oppression as engendering rebellion and anarchy. He prefers to rest in peace in the woods, with the beasts and birds, to work out his salvation through the dispensation of God, Whose knowledge is infinite and Who sees the end from the beginning, which no one else can do. Nothing will transpire which was not fully expected; nothing has any novelty to excite surprise, joy or sorrow. Thy will be done. Is it worthy of a man to be indulging in wild hopes or be sunk in the very depths of despair? Love and hatred, joy and sorrow, and fear and danger—this train of passions in rapid succession—assume absolute sovereignty over the souls of those who rule the earth and live

in society; and such was the case with the adversaries of the Pandavas. Is it not the most pitiable sight to see so many human beings, without any command over themselves, rolling and tossing, or driven wildly before the storm like vessels parted from their anchors? To imagine and see clearly what developed in the progress of time is to read the thoughts of the day into the events. The events mark the new thoughts of life and religion. None but the Brahmans could put things into order. The treatment of religion was not the only subject which had a fascination for them. The superior sanctity of an ascetic life was not the only qualification identified with their names to secure them a large following and power. The old order, no doubt, had done good work in its time, but for all that it could not be expected to last perpetually. Ideas must vary and find new expressions. Advantages of birth, rank, office, mind and person are eagerly desired, but, when they are viewed in the possession of others, a mortified and malignant feeling is engendered in the human heart. What a wretched state is this, to be offended with the excellence in a man and to detest him because the world approves of him. Fortunately the crystal rill of the great Epic was not lost, for it used to be recited in the ceremonials and even now " is being done when oblations are offered to the manes of the departed relatives," as follows:—

" Durjodhona is a great tree of passion, Karna, its trunk, Sakuni, its branch, Dushasana its fruit with flower, and weak Dhritarastra is its root. While Yudhisthira is a great tree of virtue, Arjuna, its trunk, Bhima, its branch, Nakul and Sahadeb, its fruits with flowers, and Sri Krishna, Brahma and Brahmanas are its roots."

It will be seen that there is no mention of such great warriors as Bhisma and Drona, with whom the present Mahabharata is concerned, as the generals of the great war, on whose unconquerable strength the Kuru King Durjodhana built his hopes of winning the war and retaining the throne. Kartick was Gangeya, and remained a bachelor. This was followed in the case of Bhisma. It was shown that the caste system was not then crystallised in the watertight compartments of heredity. The sages and the kings of India were tied by blood relations. The heavenly beauties descended to make the sages the laughing-stock of the heavenly bodies. The forlorn children of these disgraceful connections found shelter in the Royal houses. Bhisma, Drona, Kripa and Kripi

were such orphans, found by King Santanu. The former was adopted as a son, and the story of Kartick's birth was foisted upon him with all sorts of colouring. Bharadwaja and Gotama were the fathers of Drona, and Kripa and Kripi (brother and sister), respectively. Drona was said to have come out of a vessel left by the celestial nymph Ghritachi. Gotama likewise fell a victim to passion. Drona and the Prince of Panchala, Drupada, were undergoing their course of studies under the illustrious Agnibesa. They were friends, like their fathers, Bharadwaja and Prishta. So much so, that the Prince hesitated not to promise to place his purse and property at his friend's disposal when he would ascend his father's throne. The young pupils, being duly initiated in every branch of learning, left for their respective homes. Drona was presented with the celestial weapon called Agneya as a mark of special favour by his preceptor.

With the progress of time, it became evident to the sacred order that absolute abstinence was not a safe conduct to the retention of their power and prestige. With their keen intelligence and foresight, they saw that if they were not lawfully married they would not command respect. Drona, in obedience to his father's wishes, married Kripi, the daughter of Gotama. It was then perhaps enjoined to pass through a succession of four stages of life, *viz.*, those respectively of the Brahmacharin (religious student), the Grihamedin (householder), the Vanavasin (anchorite), and the Sanyasin (religious mendicant), in order to attain the *summum bonum* on the dissolution of the frail body. But constant company with the easy-going lives of the princes created in the heart of the young students ideas of comfort and luxury, in spite of their being subjected to the hard rules of a saintly life? Though there were great contrasts in their modes of living and rules of action, yet the influence of society outweighed all.

Drona was blessed with a son and he was called Aswathama This child, brought up and nursed, as he was, amongst the rich princes of the day, began to cry on seeing them taking milk. At this his father was so beside himself with grief, that he thought of improving his circumstances. Instead of asking for what would have been just sufficient for his purposes, he began to yearn for more, and having heard of Parasurama's name and fame, as the wielder of celestial weapons and mighty conqueror of the world, and that he was desirous of giving away all his possessions with a view to retiring from the world, he approached him. But unfortunately he was too late.

Parasurama had then no wealth about him, save his weapons, into the use of which he gladly initiated him, and gave them all to him.

On his return home, he was much distressed to find his boy being made the butt of ridicule by his companions. This was too much for a father, and to him specially, as he had been unsuccessful in his attempt. In his utter despair and grief he remembered the words of his friend, Drupada. Learning, moreover, that he had now ascended his father's throne, he joyfully thought of going to him with his family. But riches, honour and luxury are the sweets which destroy the mind's appetite for the heavenly food and bring in their train all worldly woes.

A man never shews his cousinship to the ape so much as when he is in a fit of passion. The nephew of the wise Brihaspati, the blind Dirghatama, transgressed all proprieties of good conduct and thus became an eye-sore to all the dwellers of the hermitage, as well as to his wife and children. " Blind as you are from your birth," said his wife, the beautiful Pradweshi, " it is I who support you and your children. But I shall do it no longer." Indignant at her words, he asked her to take him to a Kshatriya King. " The wealth earned by you will prove to be a source of great misery—I desire it not," exclaimed she. " Do what you will, but you can never expect me to support you as before." He could not brook this and said in anger, " Henceforth I declare that a woman shall have but one husband and shall have to stick to him in life and death. Anyone who will transgress it will be considered fallen."

Enraged at his words, the lady asked her foolish sons to throw him into the Ganges. This they did, tying him to a raft. He eventually fell into the hands of a King named Bali, who asked him to bless him as he had no sons. The sage did so. Anga, Banga, Kalinga, Sumha and Pundra were the five sons born to the queen. The kingdoms they ruled were named after them. Both the Lunar and Solar dynasties were made to trace back their origin to the great Brahminical sages Atri and Marichi, respectively. Soma was the son of Atri and Marichi's son, Kasyap, had Surva as his son. Manu Vaivasvata was the father of Illa and Ikshvaku. Pururava was the son of Illa and Budha the son of Soma. The early legendary pedigrees of the Lunar and the Solar races of the kings of India and the idea of the four castes coming out of the limbs of the Creator Brahma, were myths. The caste system in India was

simply a division of labour for the good of Hindu society, to advance civilisation without the various interests clashing one with the other. The provinces of India were divided amongst the princes who descended from the different lines of kings in India. The line of succession did not descend only to the eldest. All the sons of reigning kings used to get a share in the paternal kingdoms. Illa's son Gaya founded Gaya and Pururava reigned in Allahabad. All these were on the outskirts of modern Bengal, and the Punjab was not civilised, nor populated by the Aryans. Yajnavalkya's code represented the customs and practices prevalent in a district of Mithila. Manu represented a larger portion of the Aryan countries with better social development and civilisation. The present form of Manu reveals the exaggerated nature of the rules of the caste system and the intermixtures by which the Brahmans sought to secure their own ascendancy. It does not present a correct picture of the Epic period of India. It is said that Manu is supposed to speak in his own person as far as Chapter I.60, and after that what is described was enunciated by Bhrigu. The emotions of Viswamitra at the sight of the celestial nymph Menaka gave birth to Sakuntala, mother of Bharata, and the birth of Suka was said to have been the fruit of Vyasa's connection with Gritachi * on the banks of the Bhagirathi. The name of the great king Bharata was perpetuated in the line of kings and the history of their greatness was recorded by Vyasa in the Mahabharata.†

* The Mbh., Shanti Parvan, Chapter 325.
† The Mbh., Adi Parvan, Chapter XCIX.



THE SAGES INTRODUCING THE PANDAVAS TO THE KURUS.

Chapter IV.

The Pandavas and the Kurus.

The physical and mental development of society cannot depend so much upon the people themselves as upon the rulers who guide them. Had there been any foreign invasions of India, the people would have been influenced by the customs and manners of the invaders. Obviously, therefore, there were none. India was governed in parts, by different kings. The whole nation was not governed by one law, custom and language, although Emperors levied taxes for religious celebrations by virtue of their power. In ancient India there was no question of money payments for services rendered to the State. For such services grants of land were made, and, so long as people continued to render certain services to the State, they paid no revenue for the land they cultivated. The king and his subjects then were a big family and there was a reciprocity of feeling between them. This had a healthy influence on the relations of the rulers and the ruled, engendering mutual good feeling instead of estrangement and distrust. The Mahabharata describes the conflict between the rude colonists of Khandavaprastha, the building of Indraprastha and the progress of civilisation from Bengal to the Punjab. The principle characteristic of Epic poetry is to concern itself more with external action than the internal feelings of a race or nation as a whole. Therefore, the characters appearing in the great Indian Epic must reflect the true Hindu characters of ancient India. In the hymns of the Rig Veda, Indra and other Gods are mentioned; yet they are not the subject-matter or heroes and heroines of the Indian Epics. Rama and Sita, Sri Krishna and his loves, Pandu and Kunti, Dhritarastra and Gandhari, Yudhisthira and Draupadi, Arjuna and Subhadra, Abhimanyu and Uttara—these were the different types of heroes and heroines, developed so as to influence the imagination of the audience. They could not have achieved such popularity had their evolution not rested on some basis of historical truth. Ravana was described as a fearful demon of many heads and hands, with one hundred and one beautiful girls in the golden island of Ceylon, with whom to

enjoy sensual earthly pleasures to the full; so he became a tyrant of the worst type. This wild poetic exaggeration is not found in the descriptions of the adversaries of the heroes of the Mahabharata. The Ramayana and the Mahabharata differ materially in this respect. The Mahabharata, in the giant Bhima, certainly provides an octogenarian who, to delight his grand-children, kills the cannibal aborigines and creates havoc in the armies of the enemy. The contests between Bhima and Durjodhana and Arjuna and Karna have become classic examples of great matches of chivalry, affecting the imagination of people even now so that they fight over their superiority. This was the result of the gross interpolations of the rhapsodists to create amusement for the audience.

The history of the birth of Pandu and his sons has become a matter of controversy. Pandu was greater than Kuru, as otherwise his descendants would not have been known by his name, as distinct from that of Kuru's. There is a fight between fact and fiction in the present Mahabharata. The plot of the Mahabharata, so far as it can be seen, has three beginnings in three distinct aspects of the Bharata Kings. One is with King Nahus and his son Yajati, another with Pratip and Santanu, and the last with Pandu and his sons. Satyabati was the name of the daughter of King Gadhi who married the sage Richika and was the grandmother of Parasurama. Satyabati was also the name of the daughter of King Basuhoma who was not taken from the fisherman who found her. She became the wife of Santanu. The Chief under whose care the girl grew up to the mature age of marriage stated that the sage Parasara had asked to marry her but was refused. Surely it is ridiculous that this Chief should impose conditions for the marriage with a king like Santanu. Vyasa was not the son of Satyabati, for it was stated in the Mahabharata that Vyasa was born as a boon of God Siva. Bichitrabirya was a profligate prince who died young, leaving two sons, Dhritarastra and Pandu, who were initiated by Vyasa, which was considered their second birth. Vyasa was their godfather, and this was mistaken as meaning actual father. Vyasa's Mahabharata begins with the Pandavas and the Kouravas. The sons of Dhritarastra were born out of the boon of God Siva, and again it was stated that by the blessings of Vyasa, in the same way, King Sagar's children were born. The system of raising children by Niyoga could not have been possible, according to Manu, among the twice-born caste, and the proud Lunar family of Kings or their advisers could not have gone

against the institutes of Manu. Vyasa and Parasara, the institute-makers of ancient India, could not have been guilty of such a heinous crime, for which King Vena had been killed by the ancient sages. Dhritarastra was married to the princess of Gandhara who came from outside India, as he was blind and could not inherit his father's kingdom. Pandu was married to the daughter of Kuntibhoja. The wife of Dhritarastra was known by the name of Gandhari and was noted for her devotion to her husband. The wife of Pandu was Kunti, famous for her matchless beauty and accomplishments. Pandu accordingly took up the reins of government and his rule displayed great prowess. Peace and happiness reigned in the land. The wholesome precepts as to the duties of a good king were not lost upon him but always rang in his ears. "A king who seeks prosperity should be devoid of malice, keep his senses under control and never rest satisfied with his possessions, however rich they may be.* These things should always engage his mind—the defence of his forts, the extermination of his enemies, the administration of justice, consultations on the questions of policy and the happiness of his subjects. The majesty of such a king then appears like that of an ocean. Tributary princes swell his wealth like rivers." Impressed with the duties of an ideal king, Pandu thought of putting them into practice. Following in the wake of his worthy predecessors, he conceived the idea of declaring himself the Emperor of India. To the great delight of his superiors he made every preparation for the expedition. Performing all the auspicious rites and receiving blessings from his superiors, he set out on his great campaign accompanied by a large army, fully equipped with horses, elephants and cars. The proud King of Magadha, who offended so many kings, was brought to his knees and was killed. Mithila, Kashi, Sumha and Poundra were not spared. In fact, all the rulers of the earth paid him homage in precious gems, in gold, silver, horses elephants, camels and other valuables. He redeemed the territories and wealth lost by his ancestors, and those who had wrested them were made to serve under him and pay tribute. The prowess displayed by Pandu convinced the world that the distinguished line of Kurus was not extinct, but that its glory shone all the more. All went out to receive him. Pandu made his triumphal entry into his capital amidst a fanfare of trumpets, laden with rich presents and vast treasure, in a train of animals, conveyances and attendants. The in-coming victor made his obeisance to the illustrious Bhisma and saluted others

as each deserved. Bhisma shed tears of joy and embraced him on his successful return. The virtuous Pàndu gratified his friends and relations with rich presents—his mother, his grand-mother, his uncle—none failed to receive just consideration at his hands. These acts endeared him to all, and his joy knew no bounds. To beget dutiful, worthy children the family custom was to retire to the forest to practise asceticism. King Pratip had done this, and Pandu followed suit. Without children the debt to his forefathers could not be paid, and the pleasures, riches and luxury of a kingdom lost their charms for him. This was a glorious age for ancient India. Placing the reins of his kingdom in the hands of his blind brother Dhritarastra, under the ægis of the virtuous Vidura, he retired into the delightful regions of the Himalayas. His dutiful wives followed him there. He began to pass his days in self-culture and divine meditation. The sages there told him what to do.

In the fulness of time he was blessed with five children, three sons by Kunti, his first wife, Yudhisthira, Bhima and Arjuna, and twin sons, Nakul and Sahadeva, by Madri. His requirements were met by the men engaged by Dhritarastra, who was thus kept informed of his brother's welfare. The news of Yudhisthira's birth was not received with joy. It excited the jealousy of Gandhari, the wife of Dhritarastra, who up to then was free from it. The empire of the Kurus rose to a height of splendour and magnificence never surpassed in the long course of their history. Dhritarastra, deprived of it on the ground of physical disqualification though older than Pandu, could not bear the idea that the succession to such a throne, which he was now enjoying at the mercy of his brother, should go exclusively to the line of Pandu. But he was helpless. No son was born to him then. One day the great Vyasa came to Gandhari hungry and fatigued. She gratified and pleased him with her devotion and asked him in return to bless her so that she might not be barren. Hindus have great faith in the words of pious sages. Gandhari believed, and she was soon blessed with a child. On the very day Durjodhana was born to Gandhari and Dhritarastra, Bhima was born to Kunti and Pandu. On his birth Durjodhana cried like an ass. Ominous signs were seen. People grew alarmed at them. The wise counsellers advised the King to give up such a child. But the King, confounded with their words, suddenly gave expression to what was oppressing his mind, more than these evil omens. "Yudhisthira, the eldest born of the Kuru princes, acquired the kingdom by virtue of his birth.

but should not my son reign after him? " None gave him the desired answer, but all with one voice advised him to abandon the child. The good words had no effect as he was wholly engrossed in the idea of placing his son on the throne.

Polygamy was then the order of the day, and in order to make his son's way to the throne easy he contracted alliances with the neighbouring princes by marriages and the unions were blessed with many sons. The Hindu Pantheon teems with gods and goddesses—representations of high qualities on earth. When a particular man is found approaching to that ideal he is either accepted by the name of a God or is adored as His son. Such meed a man receives as may be due to his performance. The excellence of individual conduct, when it rises higher than the highest conception of man, engenders the idea of divinity. The world believes that the birth of such a man is inspired by God. The rare combination of bodily grace, intellectual excellence and unerring wisdom in a man makes him the idol of admiration. It is idle to suppose that such was not the case with the Pandavas. Pandu was not at all anxious about his own sons. Such a base thought could not find entrance into his noble and pure heart. Higher things than the enjoyment of his sons engaged his mind. He reared them, not in the downy beds of the palace but in the mountain fastnesses of the Himalayas. Passing his last days in perfect absolution and continual glory, and not on an earthly throne, clouded with cares and darkened with envy and fear, he ascended to Heaven. Pandu sought to reign in a kingdom where the sword of Damocles would not hang over his head. There the crown is incorruptible, fearless and boundless. The kingdom is of glory and peace. His brother, on the contrary, rejoiced. Mounted on the despised and renounced throne, he was engaged in securing it for his children. If two brothers, born and bred in the same house, could be so vastly different, what then would be the case with those who were brought up in different atmospheres, the one in the lap of Nature, the other in that of Art. The world could not help distinguishing the one from the other by distinct names. The sons of Pandu were called the Pandavas, while those of Dhritarastra retained the old title Kouravas.

Manu, in Chapter VII, verses 4 and 5, relates that a king has been made out of the essence of Gods Yama, Indra, Wind, etc., and the Pandavas represent these gods. The poet merely describes the virtues of the sons of Pandu by metaphor. There is grave doubt about the twin brothers and the marriage of

Madri with Pandu. The country to which Madri belonged* was not well spoken of in the Mahabharata. Besides, the twin brothers, unlike the other Pandavas, did no important work in the Epic, while their mother, beyond mounting the funeral pyre of her husband—a doubtful custom of the age—represented no important character like Kunti. The Pandavas, in short represent the triumvirate of Yudhisthira, Bhima, and Arjuna. Politics in those days may be said to have been confined, to a great extent, to hagiarchy, and the Mahabharata begins as a hagiology and is not a record of the deeds of the Kings and Emperors. The learned sages were the ministers, priests and instructors; and their descendants, like Parasurama, ruled over the world—he, until he became penitent of his conduct. The influence of Vasistha and Viswamitra, Bhrigu and Agastya, Brihaspati and Sukracharjya is reflected in the Indian Epics to a very great extent. They may be called the king-makers of India. Vyasa, the author of the Mahabharata, was descended from Vasistha, and Valmiki was of the Bhrigu family. The Mahabharata begins with an account of King Parikshit, grandson of Arjuna, whose life could have been saved by a descendant of the Kasyapa family, who were the original priests of the family, had he not been won over by the enemy. Parikshit's son, King Janmejoya, in order to avenge the death of his father, conquered the kingdom of Taxila and came back to his capital, Hastinapur, at the instance of a sage named Astika ('not an atheist'). This was the true implication of the great sacrifice of Janmejoya to exterminate the Nagas and the Takshakas. It was no good following the example of Parasurama, so cruel and horrible, by punishing a clan or a race for the fault of a few ambitious and degenerate creatures. Parasara, the father of Vyasa, when he thought of a means to avenge the death of his father Sakti, was prevented from carrying it out by sages like Pulasta, Pulaha, Kratu, &c. (Adi Parvan, CLXXXIII). The death of Parasara's father was justified by the sages, as his father provided the instrument of his death. "The curse of your father made King Kalmaspada devour your father, otherwise it was quite impossible for him to do so." The sage Viswamitra was instrumental to it. The curse of a sage was the cause of king Dasaratha's death, and so, it was said, with Pandu too, a recluse who gave up all sorts of enjoyments of life, in love's duel with his fictitious wife Madri. In the case of Dasaratha, a sage's son

* It is clearly stated in the Manu Samhita, Chapter IV. (244): "Let one create relationships with nobler families and avoid those that are mean and humble. (245). One becomes degraded if he makes connections with low ones."

was killed in mistake for a deer taking water at a lake, but the fiction with which the curse of Pandu's death is connected is hardly believable. Hunting expeditions were denounced. The exposition of the satisfaction of carnal appetites in the guise of deer and the killing of the mate refers to the well-known first verse of Valmiki :—

'No fame be thine for endless time,
Because, base outcast, of thy crime,
Whose cruel hand was fain to slay
One of this gentle pair at play.'*

It is quite inexplicable how this is foisted upon Pandu. Besides, the curse of such a criminal who assumed the form of a doe to satisfy her carnal appetite could not be effective, as is clearly stated in the Pousya Parva of the Mahabharata. Parasara was brought up by his grandfather Vasistha. Parasara and Vyasa were the institute-makers of India, and the latter officiated as the chief priest in the horse sacrifice of Yudhisthira, and became the author of the Mahabharata, after the deaths of Dhritarastra and Pandu. The index chapter clearly states this; and the making over of the Pandavas to the Kuru regent, king Dhritarastra, by the sages is mentioned, as also the voices from Heaven declaring the Pandavas as the true and legitimate sons of Pandu.

Here stood at the gates of Hastinapur the illustrious sages, with Kunti at the head of her children, asking audience with the king. The citizens with their wives and children flocked round the sages to pay them homage and to be acquainted with their mission and satisfy their curiosity. The king went out with his court and royal household to meet them there. The old king, Dhritarastra, with his sons, all dressed in royal pomp and splendour, contrasting with the ill-clad, mourning Pandavas with their weeping mother Kunti, was in the background behind the representatives of ancient Indian austerities and penance. What a great contrast! What a grand and solemn spectacle! Royalty paid homage to the great seers and expressed anxiety to know the object of their visit, accompanied by such stalwart youths with their mother, whose very sight created a sort of panic in their hearts. The citizens stood speechless, waiting to hear from the sages their mission and the great object of their visit in the early hours of the morning. The reverend seers with their matted locks and waist cloths called upon their elder to state the object of their mission. Solemn were the words

* Prof. Ralph T. H. Griffith's The Ramayana of Valmiki, Canto II, Book I, p. 7.

that fell from his lips. "Steadily adhering to the path of glory and virtue, Pandu departed his earthly life, leaving behind him his sons. Perform now the funeral rites of the departed great and take care of the sons with their mother, whose birth, breeding and education would, no doubt, afford you great pleasure. Let them be received with due honour. May Pandu, the staunch supporter of the dignity of the Kurus, regain the blissful regions of Heaven and his soul rest in peace!" With these words the virtuous sages retired.

All lay prostrate at the feet of those divine sages tendering them their due regard and accepting their benedictions. The Pandavas were introduced to the assembly: 'There were our pupils, your sons, your brothers, and your friends, the Pandavas' to the king, his sons and his subjects.

"When the Kuru people saw that they were introduced by the Rishis as the sons of Pandu, the higher class amongst them loudly shouted with joy. Some, however, said they were not the sons of Pandu; others said they were. Some said how could they be the sons of Pandu, who was dead long ago. Voices, however, were heard from all sides, crying, 'They are welcome. Through divine providence, we see before us the sons of Pandu. Let their welcome be proclaimed.' When the acclamations of the people ceased, tremendous plaudits of invisible spirits were heard, echoing from every point of the heavens. Showers of fragrant flowers fell, and conches and kettle-drums were sounded. Such wonders happened when the princes arrived. The joyous cry of the citizens in expression of their pleasure at the happy event was so great that it reached the very heavens."*

The Pandavas were in the garb of Brahmachari students, their hair was tied in a knot on their heads. The descriptions of their features and colouring were as follows:—

"Yudhisthira's complexion was that of pure gold, wide expanded eyes of a coppery hue, large aquiline nose and body that of a full grown lion."

"Bhisma's colour was fair as that of heated gold, his frame was of huge proportions, his arms were long and stout, and his tread was like that of an infuriated elephant."

"Arjuna was not so fair as his brothers, a bit darker, but his eyes were like the petals of a lotus, his shoulders were signs like those of a lion. He seemed to be the leader of an elephantine herd."†

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* The Mbh., Adi Parvan, Chapt: I, verses 116-121, p. 5.
† The Mbh., Ashrambasika Parvan, Chapt: XXV, verses 51-58.

"Nakul and Sahadeva had no equal in beauty and strength and excellence of good conduct. They resembled Vishnu and Mahendra."

The state funeral was performed with due ceremonies and the illustrious Vyasa was present; and the weeping mother and grand-mother of Pandu were advised not to weep. They retired from the world and engaged themselves in divine meditation in some quiet place. If Vyasa was really the father of Pandu he could not have acted as he did, for he must have been afflicted with great sorrow as when separation took place with his son Suka.

The Pandavas, after performing the due purificatory rites under the Vedas, began to adapt themselves to their new life in the royal palace of their father after so long an absence. The hardihood of the forest life in their early childhood had secured for them greater strength and courage than that of their cousins. They played, frolicked and gambolled in great joy with the sons of Dhritarastra. They were all endowed with extraordinary natural strength and courage; indeed the strongest of them, Bhima, the Eastern Samson, challenged and defeated the numerous sons of Dhritarastra. He, in childish exuberance, amused himelf by tormenting them, though he meant no harm. Durjodhana, the eldest son of Dhritarastra, complained bitterly of this treatment to the faithful adherents of his father. Kanika, a minister notorious for his vicious schemes, came to his rescue. He impressed on the young prince the maxim that physical strength was nothing before cunning artifice. He cited a story in order to make the prince realise the truth of his assertions. "Five friends, a tiger, a wolf, a mouse, a jackal and a mongoose, lived in a forest. Every one of them was very eager to eat the flesh of a deer but they could not succeed on account of its swiftness. They held a consultation amongst themselves and decided to act upon the advice of the cunning Reynard (jackal). The mouse, under its advice, ate into the hoof of the deer when it was asleep. Thus disabled, it soon fell an easy prey to the tiger. The jackal was called upon to divide it amongst them as he had risen high in their estimation. He agreed to do so, but asked Mr. Stripes (tiger) to refresh himself with water. He gladly did so, but was surprised on return to find the jackal pensive without having performed the task. He enquired about it and was told in reply that just a little before the mouse had boasted very justly that your Majesty would feast only on what your skill supplied. "Truly," he said, "I shall henceforth eat nothing killed with others' aid." With these words he retired

without partaking of the flesh. When the wolf appeared he was told to take to his heels, lest he should fall a prey to the tiger who was very angry with him and had gone to bring his mate. Similarly the mouse and the mongoose were deprived of their shares, the one being challenged to a fight, the other with the wholesome advice that the flesh was poisoned by the claws of the tiger. Mr. Reynard thus defeated everyone by his cunning trick and policy, and enjoyed the whole flesh of the deer himself." This acted as an incentive to Durjodhana to gain his ends.

A palace was accordingly built on the banks of the Ganges and provided with all sorts of luxuries according to the fashion of the day. Durjodhana invited the Pandavas as well as his own brothers to an entertainment. No one scented anything wrong and everyone was there for mirth and merriment. Highly pleased with the bright scenery and the delightful breeze, filled with the sweet fragrance of flowers, they gave themselves up to enjoyment. There were all sorts of dainties in the way of food and drink. Durjodhana, with professions of love and friendship, persuaded Bhima to take large quantities of food and drink and to sport with him in the river. There was no cause for suspicion, and soon everyone was mad with enjoyment. The mighty Bhima feeling very tired, lay down and became senseless. Durjodhana lost no time in binding him hand and foot with cords and deadly creepers, and threw him into the water. Thus accomplishing his object, he and his brothers returned to the capital in great spirits. Yudhisthira made due enquiries about Bhima and was told in reply that he had gone home before them; but on his return home, he found that such was not the case. Kunti was surprised at this and, scenting some foul play, sent for Vidura. She piteously related the grudge and dislike the sons of Dhritarastra bore towards her son Bhima and how pleased they all were at his disappearance. These, she feared, were signs too open to be mistaken. He had obviously fallen a victim to some foul play designed by them. She was, however, assured by Vidura that her son would not die as the sages positively declared that all her sons would be long-lived. Moreover, she was warned from giving vent to her feelings lest it should lead to worse results. Eventually she had to console herself with the words of Vidura, resigning the fate of her son to the will of the Almighty God.

Time hung heavily on the poor mother and brothers, who were

all praying to God. Kunti remembered the voice from heaven on the birth of Arjuna.

"Kunti was seated in the lying-in-room in the asylum, surrounded by females, at the time of Arjuna's birth. There was heard a voice in the sky which seemed to be celestial and which pleased the heart; it said: O Kunti, this son of yours will be equal to him of a thousand eyes. He will conquer in fight all the Kurus assembled together and with Bhimasena as his second will grind his enemies. Your son will be the subjugator of the world and his fame will touch the heavens; having slain the Kurus in battle with the assistance of Vasudeva, he will regain the paternal share of the kingdom which shall have been lost; and, along with his brothers, this one, endowed with prosperity, will perform three sacrificial ceremonies."*

Meantime Bhima, the terror of Durjodhana and his brothers, drifted with the current in the river and the Serpents began to infect his body with poison. Being thus continually bitten, the poison which they thought would send him to the other world brought him back to life, and later was responsible for carrying them to the other world. Bhima then fully realised his position and the false friendship of his cousin Durjodhana and others. When his senses returned he extricated himself by bursting his bonds and alighting on the shore. With the herbs and fruits with which the forest abounded he satisfied his hunger. The virtuous sages who dwelt there, seeing him thus devastating the trees, sent one amongst them to ask his name and object. The messenger, finding him related to the great Arka, who was the great-grandfather of his mother, welcomed him to their hermitage. The illustrious sages warmly embraced him and came to know the cause of his miserable plight. The sages of those days were masters of the healing art and they knew the craft of herbs and the force of *elixirs*. Bhima was not only provided with food and drink but was relieved of his great pain by an *elixir* which not only gave tone to his constitution but imparted to him greater strength than he had before. He left them quite strong and happy after paying them due respect.

While Durjodhana, his brothers and friends were celebrating their success and the Pandavas and their mother were weighed down with grief, Bhima made his appearance quite hale and hearty. He fell at the feet of his mother and elder brother and acquainted them with everything that had happened. Hearing the villainy of Durjodhana and his advisers, they then resolved

* The Mhb. Udyoga Parvan, Chapter CXXXVII, Verses 1-5, p. 189.

always to be on the alert to help one another and save themselves from the evil designs of their enemies. Durjodhana with his brothers and counsellors were surprised at the marvellous escape and only then believed in the divine origin of the Pandavas, which the wise sages had purposely announced as they knew what would happen in the future. The sages were credited with a knowledge of the past and future through their keen intelligence, wisdom and religious fervour.

"First Envy, eldest born of hell, inbrued
Her hands in blood, and taught the sons of men
To make a death which nature never made,
And God abhorr'd; with violence rude to break
The thread of life, ere half its length was run,
And rob a wretched brother of his being."

Torrents of blood flowed from this cause from the days of the fight between the Asuras and Devas. History supplies ample material for it. Nature supplies no effectual antidote against envy. The sons of Pandu were not born out of envy but to open the gates of Heaven to their father. This is what is distinctly said in the Mahabharata, Adi Parvan, Chapter CXX:—

"Pandu said:—O sages, I am not as yet free from the debt I owe to my ancestors. The best of men were born to beget children to discharge that debt. The sages said:—O virtuous-minded man, O king, there is progeny for you that will be sinless, greatly fortunate and like the celestials themselves. We see this with our prophetic eyes. O best of kings, therefore, accomplish the purposes of the celestials by your acts. The intelligent man who acts with deliberation always obtains good fruits. Therefore, O king, you should exert yourself. The fruits you will obtain are visible. You will surely obtain accomplished and agreeable sons."

The ancient Hindu idea was that one would conquer by the birth of a son, and the wife was considered the source of virtue. No religious acts could be performed without a wife. A wife was considered the best friend in the world and the source of salvation, for without a son no man could ascend to Heaven. The idea seems to have originated from the fact that, unless one became a father, one could not realise unselfish love. The birth of a child demonstrates to the world that man's energy and woman's devotion, when combined, are the roots of worldly success. True happiness depends upon the creation of an atmosphere of love in the unity of man and woman, and the

fruit of such union is the birth of a son or a daughter. The birth of a child gives birth to self-control and courage. Then the parents love their children not for the sake of future return from them. It is the work of the soul within and not the fruit of culture or education, for even animals are endowed with such a love. The atmosphere of love thus created is the passage to Heaven. To a man or a woman who can realise the true intention of the Creator, His divine love is thus reflected. The worldly aspect of the question is uttered in the Vedic incantations on the birth of a son by a priest of the family.

" You are born of my body; you have sprung from my heart. You are myself in the form of my son. Live for one hundred years." " My life depends on you. The continuation of my race also depends on you. Therefore, live in happiness for one hundred years."*

The beautiful Sakuntala said to her husband: " Wife is the sacred soil in which the husband is born again. Even sages cannot create men without women. The touch of the sandal paste, that of women and water is not so pleasing as that of one's own infant son, locked in his embrace."

The work one does for no return or reward breathes the spirit of Heaven, which is called the breath of love. When man and woman are united by true love they produce good and worthy children; but when they are the fruits of passion they become the embodiment of envy and jealousy. They arise where there is an idea of oneness and the exclusive enjoyment of self and everyone around that self. The false love and affection for a wicked, uncontrolled and ambitious son like Durjodhana or Aswathama were the causes of the ruin and destruction of the Kurus and of Drona. The great author shows, side by side, this difference between the two branches of a family. The great labour of love would have been lost if there were not Vyasa or Valmiki to discern in the contending parties the intricacies of the moral and spiritual aspects of Divine love centred in the human creation of the kings and sages of ancient India. Hindus burn their dead, and memories are perpetuated within their children, which is considered to be the real heaven on earth. The word of the philosopher becomes true, that the soul never dies and a son is considered the birth of the soul and the boon of God and not the fruit of passion and lust. When sons were the fruits of passion they were sacrificed, like the children

* "The Mahabharata, As it was, Is and Ever shall be" p. 320 Mbh., Adi Parvan, Chapter LXXIII, verses 61-63.

of Bharata, the Nestor of the great race of kings of India. The history of the great fortunes of the descendants of the illustrious King Santanu of the Bharata race is called the Mahabharata. (Chapter XCIX, verse 48.)

" All the kings of the earth seeing him devoted to all kinds of virtues, installed him as the King of Kings." (Chapter C, verse 7.)

" During the reign of that best of the Kuru Kings Santanu the speech was mixed with truth and mind was devoted to liberality and virtue." (Ibid verse 19.)

Chapter V.

Indian Military Training and Tests.

There lived a sage, Bharadwaja by name, famous for his austerities and ever mindful of practising religious and sacred rites. One day in his daily ablutions in the sacred river of the Ganges he caught a fleeting glance of the celestial nymph, the beautiful Gritachi, nude but for her dishevelled locks as she came out of the water. It is more to his honour than his shame that he fell an easy prey to love in all its dreamy fancies of form and colour, taking visible form in one living creature with the maiden pride of purity. The power of resistance was then found wanting in him and Drona was born. He covered his face with shame and left the son in a pot. Nothing was heard of the father and mother, but the infant was saved. The ancient sages of those days were to a great extent wanting in their duties to their children and in having the courage of their own convictions. Gotama, a sage no less conspicuous than Bharadwaja, gave birth to Kripa and Kripi. The name and prestige of these sages were maintained by their devoted disciples till the thought of marrying and rearing children occurred to them openly. Drona was married to Kripi, but he was too poor to maintain his son Aswathama, brought up in the sight of luxury and enjoyment. He was a disappointed man, trying his level best to improve his position. He lived with his wife and child in the house of Kripa, his brother-in-law, who was a tutor to the young Kuru princes. One day, after finishing his daily prayers he saw the young princes indulging in a game of battledore and shuttle-cock on the plains of Kurukshettra, and when the cock accidentally fell into a well they could not recover it and stared at one another. Drona thought of solving their problem by his skill and began smiling at them, which drew them to him. They circled round him and it did not take him long to read their minds. He cried shame on them :—" Is this your skill in arms and Kshatriya prowess, born in the race of the great king Bharata? Here it is! " And he brought the shuttle-cock out.

Surprised at this wonderful exhibition of skill, they lost no

time in reporting it to the old king. Kripa, being questioned, informed the king that Drona was the right man to teach the princes the use of arms, and a messenger was sent forthwith to bring him to the court.

> " Deep scars of thunder had intrenched, and care
> Sat on his faded cheek; but under brows
> Of dauntless courage and considerate pride
> Waiting revenge."

" O Lord!" cried Drona, remembering the old feud between the Kurus and Panchals, " I am here to pass a few days with my brother-in-law, Kripa, the instructor at arms of these princes, on my way home from Drupad's court, who insulted me when I called upon him to redeem the promise he had made in his younger days of giving me half of his kingdom on ascending his father's throne."

The Kuru Court welcomed him and placed the princes under his care after presenting him with rich presents and making due arrangements for his comfort.

> " The sun which gilds all nature and exhilarates the whole creation, does not shine upon disappointed ambition. Men in this deplorable state of mind find comfort in spreading the contagion of their spleen."
>
> —*Burke.*

It was an evil hour when Drona thought of revenge and which made him condescend to accept service under a king to achieve it. A sage he had been from his very birth and surely he should not have done this. " God and pride cannot dwell in the same mind and could not dwell in the same heavens; and pride fallen from heaven ascends no more from whence it is fallen." There was a time when such precepts were not mere dead letters but were preached and practised. Vasistha, the great-grandfather of Vyasa, did not think of revenge though his cause was more just than that of which Drona complained. His son was cruelly murdered before his own eyes without reason. His line would have been extinct but for Parasara, Sakti's son, who was in his mother's womb when his father was killed. Vasistha not only forgave the murderer of his son but blessed him with a child to revive his line, which was threatened with extinction. Such a generous return of good for evil was not rare, but with the influence of time it became so.

Having accepted the princes as his pupils, Drona one day called them aside and said: " O bright hopes! promise that

when you will be masters of arms under me you will accomplish what I cherish in my heart." None but Arjuna came forward with the desired reply. This endeared him to the preceptor's heart. Drona, in order to test the devotion of his pupils, called upon them to free him from the jaws of an alligator when it had seized him one day while he was bathing in the river. All but Arjuna stood confounded. He carried out the order as soon as he heard it. The preceptor was delighted with his readiness and devotion. He blessed him with a celestial weapon called Agneya and declared before all that none would be able to surpass him in arms.

Drona's fame as a wielder of arms travelled far and wide and princes from distant lands flocked to receive lessons from him. Arjuna's unusual zeal and unflagging devotion won for him the foremost place amongst the learners. This excited jealousy in many a heart. Karna one day approached the preceptor privately and said:—" O father! there is no difference between a son and a pupil. Pray initiate me into the mysteries of the Brahma weapon as I wish to fight a duel with Arjuna. Bless me that I may occupy a place of honour amongst the accomplished warriors of the day." Drona, seeing his jealousy of Arjuna, quoted the rule which precluded him from gaining his ends. None but a Brahmin or Kshatriya who had practised austere penances could claim to master the Brahma weapon. Karna, though disappointed, was not hopeless. He was determined to gain his end by some means, fair or foul. He went to Parasurama and did not disclose his real identity, but represented himself as coming of Bhrigu's race and as a Brahman by birth. Parasurama received him kindly and taught him the use of the much-coveted weapons. Though Karna spared no pains to keep it a dead secret, yet the truth at last leaked out. One day Parasurama happened to fall into a sound sleep, resting his head on Karna's lap, and was roused at the touch of blood. He saw that a worm had bitten Karna and from the spot was issuing the blood which touched his body.

He said: " O fool, what is this? Tell me who are you? Such patience cannot be found in a Brahman."

" O father! I am a Suta by birth and had to introduce myself as one of your family as it is recited in the Vedas that a revered preceptor is one's father; and I knew it well otherwise you would not have initiated me into the mysteries of these weapons."

" O wretch, begone, this is no place for you. Avaricious as

you are and given to mean falsehood, I have to tell you that it will not be of any use to you against your adversary."

Karna was not the only person who was refused admittance to learn the use of arms under Drona on account of birth. A Nishad prince, Ekalabya by name, met with the same fate. But he pursued a different course and became no less conspicuous than Karna. His lightness of hand, precision of aim to hit objects by auricular perception amazed even Arjuna, the best of Drona's pupils. The famous pupil went to his master and complained bitterly of finding a rival in Ekalabya, whom he could not defeat. Drona was surprised at this, for he refused to believe that anyone else could learn half so well as Arjuna did, and for that reason he had blessed him to be without a rival. Now he was called upon by his beloved pupil to fulfil his blessing. He went with Arjuna to see the man with his own eyes and to clear his doubts. He was none the less surprised when Ekalabya, seeing him approach, went forward and prostrated himself at his feet as his pupil. He could not recognise him and asked him how he was claiming to be his pupil.

"O father," said Ekalabya, "I went to you to learn archery, but you refused to take me in as I was a Nishad. Though disappointed, I lost not heart, but made a clay image of you. I worshipped it and before it I practised with my bow and arrows. It is this which endowed me with the skill and made me what I am." With these words he stood before him with folded hands, ready to obey his command.

Drona demanded of him his fees as a preceptor.

"O father, I am ready to give you all I have at your command."

"Thy thumb," Drona thundered forth.

The poor Nishad did not hesitate to gratify his preceptor, though it disabled him for life. Alas! the ways of man are inexplicable.

The ignorant Nishad prince, Ekalabya, without questioning Drona's right to his claim, believed in his heart of hearts that, by accepting his thumb, Drona accepted him as his pupil, which otherwise he would not have done. But cruel Drona never hesitated to accept the fulfilment of his unjustifiable claim. Drona went to Drupada for such food and drink in which princes indulged for his son and was unsuccessful, and so took service under a king for revenge. And now, to further that purpose, because of the devotion of Arjuna, and to keep his

word, how could he feel any compunction in severing a limb from a Nishad whom he had despised and refused to admit as a pupil before? Parasurama's curse on Karna and Drona's behaviour to Ekalabya are enough for anyone to judge of the injustice done to them on account of their low births. To tell the truth, these Aryans and Non-Aryans were merely step-brothers, the sons of Kasyap by his wives Aditi and Diti, respectively, and they were described in early times as Devas and Asuras. It was said that the Brahman Dwija (Brahman, Kshatriya and Vaisya) sprang from the Devas and Sudras from the Asuras. There was no distinction of caste in the beginning, and in process of time men were divided into castes in consequence of their work. He is a Brahman in whom truth, patience, austere fervour and compassion are seen, but those fond of sensual pleasure, fiery and irascible, fell into the division of Kshatriyas, while those who lived by agriculture were Vaisyas. Birth is vain until action is shown, as everyone is a Sudra if no fixed rules of conduct are observed. These are the findings of the texts of the Mahabharata, Vedas and the Brahmanas, and they will no doubt help in judging the characters in their true light. Furthermore, the nursery tales of the Mahabharata abound in interesting facts and have the rare merit of elucidating the true state of affairs. Garuda is said to have devoured thousands of Nishads and let off a Brahman with a Nishad wife who went into his belly. Jaratkaru married the sister of Vasuki and left her on a false pretext and did not support her. His son Astika stopped the great sacrifice of King Janmejoya where the Mahabharata was recited. In ancient days Supratika did not partition his paternal property with his brother Vivavasu, lest it gave an opportunity to enemies to come in the guise of friends, cause estrangement and bring ruin upon them. They cursed each other and became beasts,—one an elephant and the other a tortoise. They fought even in their transformations in after life, when they were eaten up by Garuda as soon as they thought of God Narayana. This is recited in Hindu homes even now with great religious fervour. Garuda is a famous bird which carried Vishnu on its back and ate all serpents—the forms of Satan and emblems of envy. Inter-marriages between Aryans and Non-Aryans were not rare, and the evidence of such a marriage can be cited even in the Bharata race. The famous Yajati married the daughter of the King of the Asuras, the beautiful Sarmistha. The Panchals were also descended from the Bharata race. The Bharata race became famous on

account of its great regard for the public good. It was said that Bharata, the great founder, had nine sons by three wives, but when they were found incompetent to rule the earth, their very mothers killed them. The king then performed a great sacrifice and was blessed with a son through the grace of Bharadwaja, the father of Drona. It was for this reason that Dhritarastra was asked to forsake his son Durjodhana, on whose birth evil omens appeared.

A trial was held to convince the old king and the world of the skill and might of the Kuru princes. The pupils would do credit to the lessons they learnt by their performances. The field was selected, measured and levelled and every detail was carried out under the direct supervision of Drona. No pains were spared to make it a signal success. The king, though blind, would grace the lists with the royal household and his distinguished court. Magnificent platforms were raised, seats were provided and galleries enclosed the arena so that the royalties, male and female, the nobles and gentry and the spectators might have a full view of the great exhibition. These stands were filled to their utmost. The general public were interested in the proficiency of the princes in the use of arms, as the natural safety of a country depended on their ability and skill. Archery, sword and club practices and charioteering were then much in evidence. The mock fights often turned out to be real ones, and every precaution was taken to separate the combatants by capable men and put an end to the fray. The great contrast in the variety of dresses, the glittering gems and jewels set in brilliant ornaments of the great assemblage lent an additional charm to the scene. The plainer attire of the rustic beauties in the gallery behind served as a modest background, relieving and setting off the rich grandeur. The old king Dhritarastra, accompanied by his retinue and followed by the queens Gandhari, Kunti and their friends, was greeted with hearty cheers. Immediately after them appeared the hoary-headed preceptors, Drona and Kripa, in white garments, and the young Aswathama. The Brahmans chanted holy hymns as they passed. No sooner had they taken their seats than the musicians played select strains of music, welcoming them and encouraging the rivals. The trumpets' loud blast excited them all. There were thousands of women—aye, and of men too—who blanched not at the sight of blood. The whole audience grew eager to recognise from the feats of arms their future hopes, on whose skill and proficiency the fate of their

motherland so largely depended. They did not come to witness it with a view to pass their leisure hours or lull their senses, but to realise the noble work of chivalry, setting free the weak from the clutches of the tyrant and making their arms the bulwarks of their country's defence. Such notes were struck, and found an echo in every heart at the clarion call of music. To maintain the traditions unimpaired and receive tributes of praise, to embalm their names in glory, were the thoughts of every young combatant in the jousts. The past champions' glory the bards sang, and the heralds read out the distinguished accounts of their descendants' proud position and learning to uphold their glory. In order of precedence and age they descended into the arena and shewed their skill and dexterity with bows and arrows, sword and buckler, mace and spear, on horse and on foot, on car and elephant. Their beauty of person and symmetry, their grace and chivalrous demeanour called forth loud applause from the spectators. Yudhisthira was the first to grace the lists, Durjodhana and Bhima followed one after the other. The skill in bending the bow and throwing the javelin, wielding the sword and hitting the target, riding the horse and leading the elephant, driving the car and marshalling the field, evoked shouts of joy expressive of keen appreciation and interest. Durjodhana and Bhima, the two great champions in the use of the mace, were engaged in a duel. Right and left, back and forth, they moved, whirling their ponderous clubs to keep their vantage ground. Public expectation was strained to the highest pitch and speculations were rife. Spectators were divided in their opinions, one shouting for Durjodhana, the other for his adversary. Excited as they were at every turn, the combatants' blows descended and were warded off with force and skill. Each bade defiance of the other's skill and held his ground, till anger seized them to make them think of a decisive blow. The learned preceptor, seeing the fight assume an unpleasant turn, called upon his son to part them at once. Thus prevented, they returned. Then Arjuna, clad in golden panoply, entered the lists. Drona himself heralded his advent and he was hailed with enthusiastic applause. The ovation took the king by surprise and, blind as he was, he enquired of Vidura what it was. He learnt of the reason and could hardly afford to ignore it. The graceful champion did what others had done before him with ease and elegance, and then exhibited his wonderful skill in archery and in celestial arms. He let fly 21 arrows into the hollow of a cow's horn,

hung upon a rope, swinging it to and fro. In this way he kept the audience spellbound. Acclamations after acclamations greeted him at every act, till he was declared the victor of the day. Scarcely had the animation subsided and Durjodhana and his brothers were about to leave, when an uproar at the entrance diverted everyone's attention. The preceptor forbade Durjodhana to go out into the tumult. Ere long, through the surging crowd a warrior, tall and strong, resounding his arms by striking them fiercely against one another, made his way. Bowing almost slightingly to Drona and Kripa he addressed Arjuna in deep accents and in a loud voice: " The feats that thou hast performed will be done by me. Thou shalt be a witness to it to yield thy palm to me." After due ceremonies he showed his skill, trying to outdo Arjuna. The whole audience sprang to their feet. Arjuna began to shake with anger and Durjodhana was mad with joy. He could not restrain his feelings, welcomed the stranger with warm embraces and offered him his friendship.

" Oh, mighty victor," said he, " fortunately for me thou hast come. Myself and my wealth are all at thy command."

" My performances have gained thy friendship. What else more can I demand than a single combat with Arjuna? " was his reply.

" Noble! " cried Durjodhana, " thou art indeed fit to place thy feet on the neck of thy adversary."

Arjuna could ill afford to brook this insult and he cried aloud: " Thou shalt pay the penalty of an intruder and death shall be thy meed for thy bragging."

"The field is free to all," said the challenger. "Valour is its own passport. Angry words are the coward's weapon. Wait not, warrior, for thy call, answer it with thy arm. In the presence of thy worthy preceptor thou shalt receive thy just reward."

When Arjuna, with his preceptor's permission, was about to give battle, Kripa, well versed in the laws of the duel, stepped in with these words: " Well, here is Arjuna, the son of Pandu and born in the illustrious Kuru race. Name thy lineage, for a prince of the royal blood can only measure weapons with a prince."

The stranger hung his head in shame and could give no reply.

Durjodhana hastened to his rescue. " Preceptor," he cried, " pray, be fair and just. Certainly it is not birth but worth which makes a man rise in the estimation of all. Is he not fit to wear the crown of a King? "

"Oh no, my friend," retorted Bhima, "let him better take up the whip and throw away his bow."

"You should not talk like that," rejoined Durjodhana. "The sources of heroes, like rivers, are unknown. Know ye not that the births of our worthy masters Drona and Kripa are connected with a water-vessel and a heath, respectively? Know ye not Viswamitra and others, Kshatriyas by birth, who became Brahmans? Can a deer bring forth a lion?"

The hot discussion looked like degenerating into fisticuffs, and consternation reigned when Durjodhana, taunted about his birth, said, "O preceptor, it is said in the Shastra that three classes of men can claim royalty, namely, persons of noble birth, heroes, and those that lead soldiers. But if Falguni is unwilling to fight with one who is not a king, I install him (Karna) as the king of Anga."

Vaishampayana said, "When the cheers ceased, at that very moment the greatly powerful car-warrior Karna, seated on a golden seat, the (royal) umbrella over his head, and yak tails waving by his side, was installed king of Anga by the Brahmanas, learned in the Mantras, in the proper form, with paddy, flowers, Ghata (water-pots) and much gold. 'O King' (Karna), said to the Kaurava (Durjodhana), 'What shall I give you compared with your gift of a kingdom! O king, O best of men, I shall do all you will command.' Durjodhana replied, 'I long for your friendship.' Having been thus addressed, Karna replied, 'Be it so.' They thereupon embraced each other in joy and felt great happiness.*"

Durjodhana, taking his friend Karna by the hand and surrounded by his brothers, went home in a torchlight procession. Everyone grew anxious to know the identity of the unknown figure and were at last informed that he was Karna, the son of Adhirata, a charioteer, Suta by caste, and an adherent of Dhritarastra. The appearance of Karna at a time when the sons of Dhritarastra were burning with envy at the superior skill of the Pandavas was to them a great relief. The objection taken by the preceptor led them to take on trust the claim of Karna that Arjuna was no match for him. The jealousy and envy on which they had been fed since almost their first meeting with the Pandavas increased instead of being diminished by the presence of Karna, and the idea of defeating Arjuna had led him to his base deception of Parasurama that he might learn from him the use of prohibited arms in the guise of a Brahman. The

* The Mbh. Adi Parvan, Chap. CXXXVIII, verses 35-41, p. 198.

tournament gave him an opportunity to try his hand at championship with Arjuna. He not only failed to avail himself of the chance, but the assembly, with the preceptor at their head, were throwing in his teeth the taunt of the Royal birth of his detested adversary by comparison with his own. This was too much for him and served to embitter his feelings towards the Pandavas all the more. He had no good words for them after this and throughout his life sought to injure them as much as he could. His vanity gave him grounds to think that the preceptor threw dust in the eyes of the assembly in order to save his beloved pupil from an ignominious defeat. Such an impression is only possible in a case of inferior merit, which alone calls for a trial, for glory lies in victory while defeat counts for nothing. Whilst such thoughts were crossing Karna's mind, Durjodhana came to his rescue. The latter made him think that he carried the day by openly declaring him before the assembly a governor of a place in the kingdom.

The public exhibition of feats of arms by Indian princes in those chivalrous days was a great event. The general public as well as the great kings of the neighbouring countries took due notice of it. Cruel massacres and bloody battles were the order of the day, in which the powerful princes and their instructors used to indulge with a view to demonstrating practically the lessons they had learnt. The great teachers of the Vedas, the Brahmanas, the Upanisads and great philosophers could not put a stop to these false vanities of the Kshatriyas. The results did not ultimately lead to the peace of the country. The ambition of young princes and their instructor's desire to be properly rewarded by their guardians were at the root of all these exhibitions. The military tournament, in which the young Kurus and the Pandavas indulged, did them no good, for it brought about ill-feeling between them, and the advent of Karna and his friendship with the Kurus not only intensified it but made it very bitter. Drona was anxious to fulfil his desire of improving his position by a reward. He was surprised when Karna was rewarded before he was. This naturally upset him a great deal. Further, Kripa and Drona were mortified on seeing the manner in which Karna was received by the Kuru Princes and their father, old King Dhritarastra. Their prestige and honour were then at stake and Drona thought of a plan to kill two birds at one throw. He got the private assent of the old king to put into practice the lessons of war in a mock fight with his great adversary, the Panchal King Drupada. He called

first upon the Kuru princes, with their great friend Karna, to perform, and asked the Pandavas to remain idle till their turn was over. Due notices were sent to the Panchals of their intentions and they were warned to make ready for the attack and counterattack. This was all that remained to complete the breach between the Kurus and the Pandavas. Drona, of course, did not then foresee this, but wanted to humiliate the braggart Karna and his great friend Durjodhana and prove that his favourite pupil Arjuna was the best of the whole lot and Bhima next. Little did he know that it would ultimately bring ruin upon him. He only wanted to teach Drupada the value of a promise to a poor Brahman, to revenge the insult he had unjustly experienced at Drupada's hands and fulfil his aim and ambition. It proves beyond doubt that it was an age when might was the only right. Morality and religious rites were not uppermost then. Drona and Drupada were not true friends. Bhisma, Drona and Kripa were outcasts and orphans, recovered by King Santanu in his time, they had degenerated in the later generation and were instrumental in rekindling the old feud by this mock fight. Karna came as a champion of the Suta race to ascend the throne of the Anga kingdom at the instructions of Durjodhana, who was not then proclaimed even as heir-apparent. Drona was the son of the sage Bharadwaja, who was a contemporary of Rama Chandra, and a pupil of Parasurama. Bhisma was also the pupil of Parasurama. Bharadwaja was the son of Brihaspati, and the origin of his name was said to be that he was supported by king Bharata, son of Sakuntala or brother of Rama Chandra. Both might be possible, as Bharadwaja officiated at the sacrifice of the Lunar king Bharata in order to beget a proper child and Rama Chandra went to the place of residence of the sage Bharadwaja at Allahabad, which still exists, where he was worshipped both at the time of going into exile and on returning to the capital from exile after his victory over Ravana in Ceylon. The question of anachronism compels every reasonable man to say that Bhisma, Drona, Kripa and Karna were artistic developments of the age to embellish the principal heroes and heroines of Vyasa, which were as follows:—"Vyasa has fully described the greatness of the Kuru race, the virtues of Gandhari, the wisdom of Vidura and the constancy of Kunti. He has also described the divinity of Vasudeva (Krishna), the goodness of the sons of Pandu, and the evil conduct of the sons of Dhritarastra.*"

* The Mbh. Chapter I, Adi Parvan, verses 99-100 p. 4.

These characters, who were the Commanders-in-Chief in the great fight on the side of the Kurus, were merely after-thoughts of the revisers of the great Vyasa, the real author of the Mahabharata. They were the ornaments of Vyasa's heroes and heroines and no harm would be done to them if they were there just to lend artificial colourings to the plain incidents of life in order to make them attractive and interesting. Besides, the general public have become so familiar with them that to remove them would leave blanks which would offend their sentiments, and would be murdering familiar fictitious characters of the Mahabharata.

This was the growth of the Mahabharata in the Age of Chivalry in India where an ideal disinterested knight like Bhisma became an outgrowth and an after-thought in later age to be mixed up with the Bhakti cult of the Srimadbhagavata.

CHAPTER VI.

Mock Fight and Preceptor's Fee.

The mock fight was a means to an end. Swimming cannot be learnt without going out of one's depth and risking life to some extent. The mock fight may be likened to this. The preceptor follows the pupils to warn and teach them with his own weapons, and if occasion arises saves them from impending danger. So great was the confidence placed on the preceptor of those days in India. They were the makers of ancient India. To develop the rare faculty of hitting the right nail on the head at every emergency in battle or combat, a mock fight in the presence of a preceptor against an able fighter was necessary. Drona could not wreak vengeance on Drupada without a following like the Kurus and the Pandavas, and for that he went to Kripa, waiting for an opportunity. He utilised it to the fullest extent. His soliloquies provide an interesting analysis of his character, and for this he was introduced into the great Epic. Drona was made an important character whose conduct reflected on a certain section of the combatants. His indomitable perseverance, courage and skilful practice of arms have passed into a proverb, as has Bhisma for his resolution. There is a subtle difference in the reading of characters Eastern and Western. Drupada and Drona may be compared to Cæsar and Brutus, and their great difference will be manifest in the incidents following the mock fight in the terms of its victory. The great plot of the Mahabharata was based on it. The Brahmanic ascendancy to the throne from the high altar of sacrifices and religious rites sounded the death knell of the origin of the theory of a hereditary caste system set up by Brahma, great Creator of the social system of the Hindus in ancient India. The marrying of kings' daughters to sages was altered in time by results, but the powerful wielder of arms, from the days of Parasurama, could not resist the great temptation of enjoying the pleasures of the senses by lording over earthly kingdoms. His disciples, like Drona, followed him, but this retrogression was retarded with the aid of great sages and kings under the guidance of the great man of the

age, Sri Krishna. The very Pandavas, the disciples of Drona, became the instruments of Drona's death and dethronement. This is the great plot of the Mahabharata—a beautiful piece of fiction, but as a history of actual facts it must be understood to be rather doubtful. Drona cherishes in his heart the great sense of wrong and of his own greatness in preference to that of Drupada. There were no such noble sentiments in Drona's soliloquy worthy of his position as a grandson of Brihaspati, priest of the Gods above and law-maker of India.

The Brahma weapon, hitherto unknown to the Kshatriyas, was at last revealed to them to accomplish the end of Drona. Endowed with it, Parasurama conquered the earth several times, making the Kshatriyas pay dearly for their offence and did not initiate any but a Brahmin into its mysteries till he was imposed upon by Promethean Karna. Arjuna was taught by Drona to serve the latter's own ends. It was the turning point and indeed an evil hour for Brahmanic power. It was like the last glow of the embers before the flame died out. "Drupada! Why should that name be sounded more than mine?"—this was the thought oppressing Drona for years. Let him see now what a poor Brahman can do. What he promised he did not fulfil; he went further and insulted Drona without any justification. He did not soften the blow or excuse it by saying that it was a childish promise or give him something else in its place, or meet his demands by offering him service on his estate. Instead of this, he had the audacity to insult Drona, in the way he did, without any feeling of compunction.

"Why, man, he doth bestride the narrow world
Like a Colossus; and we petty men
Walk under his huge legs, and peep about
To find ourselves dishonourable graves.
Men at some time are masters of their fates;
The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars,
But in ourselves that we are underlings.
Brutus and Cæsar: what should be in that Cæsar?
Why should that name be sounded more than yours?"
—*Shakespeare.*

Aye, there was the rub that made Drona think of service and of setting one against the other. The Kurus, the sworn enemy of the Panchals, therefore received lessons at his hands.

Drona exclaimed:—"O princes, show your skill by defeating Drupada and bring him to me."

Hundreds of princes, all accomplished in arms, were ready

and eager to satisfy their preceptor with their services. To win his golden opinion they vied with one another to be in the front rank in the attack. They came out armed to the teeth in their beautiful chariots and cars and on horses. The vain Karna, Durjodhana, Dushasana and others offended the Pandavas. Arjuna, agreeable to the wishes of his preceptor, preferred to stand at a distance with his brothers. The Kuru princes, with great fury, began the assault. The citizens, young and old, with their king at their head, came out of the capital to meet them. They began to shower arrows and other missiles. The sound of conches, trumpets and drums, accompanied by loud war-cries shook the very earth. The mighty Drupada, careering over the field like a firewheel, smote Durjodhana, Dushasana and even that braggart Karna, and slaked their thirst for battle. His fearful charge they could not stand, they broke and took to their heels. Hearing their terrible yells and seeing them flying in all directions, Arjuna with his brother Bhima took the field. Fearless Bhima ran ahead with his ponderous club. The mighty elephants fell before him like cliffs loosened by thunder; horse and foot soldiers ran like chaff before the wind, and chariots, horses and men tumbled like tempest-tossed ships.

Before the skill of Arjuna all attempts of the Panchals proved abortive. In no time the tide of battle turned. Drupada was taken aback, being called upon all of a sudden to give up the chase and make a stand to maintain his vantage. The battle raged furiously. They broke each other's ranks and consternation reigned supreme. The issue seemed doubtful till at last the two heroes Arjuna and Drupada emerged from the hosts to decide the issue in single combat. Each in his turn was looking for an opportunity to deal a decisive blow, and all eyes were turned upon them. Long the fight continued, and every moment victory or defeat seemed imminent. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, a fierce shout was heard. All eyes blinked and saw Drupada in the clutches of Arjuna, who boarded the former's car, rendering him helpless by cutting his bow string, felling the flagstaff and slaying the horses with the charioteer. At this the rank and file of the Panchala army took to flight. Arjuna called to Bhima to desist from the battle. The inestimable prize—Drupada with his ministers—Arjuna laid at the feet of Drona. The preceptor's long-cherished hope was at last realised.

"Now, my friend," he said, "would you care to revive the

old friendship and live? Be not afraid of your life. The remembrances of our younger days stand in the way of my taking such a step. Moreover, Brahman as I am, my nature is disposed to mercy. How can one be the friend of a king without a kingdom? Therefore meet it is that you should have it—the half of your kingdom lying to the south of the Bhagirathi I return, and I retain the other half lying to the north of the same river to make you worthy of my friendship."

"Certainly," replied Drupada, "it bespeaks thy noble heart and great prowess."

All this may, at first sight, seem as though it were of no greater consequence than a mere record, say, of any other war waged by one race against another. But no; these are great events in the history of a nation. Great things are involved in the issue.

Drona lost sight of the heavenly kingdom before the earthly crown. The highest sense of the place of religion and morality in the conduct of the world yielded to earthly comforts and luxury. The desires which rise daily in one's mind, if not restrained, haunt one as spectres, and the mischief they are calculated to work is manifold. He does not hesitate to have recourse to any measures to gain his end, even though it be detrimental to his peace of mind. The scorching sun, timely showers and fertile land contribute to the sweetness of a fruit; similarly, severe penances, austere rites and divine thoughts emancipate the soul from the abuses of desire, so that one may realise what self-sacrifice and contentment are as a means of purging one of envy and resentment. All this had to change, for not even the best system of authority and discipline can be permanent. It was either the way of his time, or perhaps it was too much to expect him to free himself of all the errors of attachment for which the age in which he flourished was so conspicuous. Drona, who had been practising severe penances and observing all the rites of a saintly life since his birth, failed to withdraw from the world, like his predecessors, after the birth of a son. The sages, who had done so much to further the cause of humanity, and, by their own examples and precepts, to impose an ideal life and morality in India, were now succeeded by men of Drona's stamp. However, he laid the foundation of the Brahman dynasty of kings in India.

It was like the sovereignty of the Pope in Europe in the days of Charlemagne. Brahmans, sages as they were then called,

were the proud champions of religion, peace and order, the guardian angels of mankind to preach the religion of love and teach the strong to use their power for the service of the country and not for the oppression of their fellow-beings. But what of one of these great sages who not only lent his name but did not mind offering his services merely to enjoy the fruit of his revenge and fulfil his desire? It was a mark of the decline of religious feelings within him. Vengeance is not the spirit of a saint but that of a devil. When it finds entrance into the heart of a sage it declares to the world that the kingdom of glory is gone and darkness reigns. The proud prerogatives of the sages failed to command respect and exercise a healthy restraint on princes and peasants alike. The blind faith in them could no longer stand. Men began to feel that they could no longer submit to any absolute authority, in religion and morality, but were bound to look for the truth themselves at the dictates of bright reason and clear conscience. The very progress which the sacred order of sages had done so much to further, at last carried men beyond the institutions which had been so useful. This caused the Brahmans' authority to decline rapidly in India.

Reward was the question of questions that arose after the success of the mock fight. Drona, the preceptor, was installed on the throne of half of the kingdom of the Panchals and he made Ahichattra his capital.* A year after this, Yudhisthira was installed at Hastinapur as the heir-apparent to the throne. Yudhisthira became famous for his unswerving honesty of purpose, truthfulness, fortitude, patience, benevolence and firmness. Bhima received lessons from Balarama in the art of fighting with the sword, club and car and became famous in strength and valour like King Dyumutsena. Arjuna had already acquired a name for precision of aim, for lightness of hand, for using both hands without any difference, and for general proficiency in every branch of weapon play. Drona openly declared him pre-eminent on this happy occasion, initiating him as he did with a Brahma weapon which he had got from his preceptor Agninesha, a disciple of the great sage Agastya, from whom Rama Chandra received the weapon to kill Ravana. This was the gift in appreciation of the valuable services Arjuna rendered to his preceptor in winning the kingdom from the king of the Panchals in the mock fight.

Drona took advantage of the great celebration on the

* Adi Parvan, Chapter CXLI.

installation of Yudhisthira as the fit and proper occasion to declare Arjuna as the best of all his pupils; and none was equal to him in the use of arms in the world. Little did he know that later he would have to fight against him in actual war for his very life and kingdom. Drona was not only an instructor at arms but taught the Pandavas the codes of morality and other duties, in which Sahadeb excelled. Nakul was a skilful car-warrior. The description of this installation is very meagre, no mention being made of the friends and relations of the Kurus and the Pandavas who participated in this great function, and of the presents the most affectionate and amiable prince Yudhisthira received from his uncle, King Dhritarastra, and other near and dear relations on so auspicious an occasion.

It is only said that within a very short time Yudhisthira, with the heroism of his brothers, outshone the glories of his great ancestors. They were ever mindful of extending the kingdom in every direction. King Vipala of the Sauravas was killed and King Sumitra of Sauvira, known as Dattamittra, was subjugated. Bhima and Arjuna conquered all the recalcitrant kings of the South and the East and the rich booties of these conquests were sent as presents to the old king, Dhritarastra. He, instead of being pleased with them, was suddenly filled with great anxiety for his own son's future and became quite miserable. He could not sleep at night and his mind was poisoned against the Pandavas.

The Ramayana and the Mahabharata set up different kinds of kings of ancient India. The kings were not then mere prisoners of the State, kept in proper state, made to talk, act and marry in a fashion acceptable to the people. They were all cultured heroes, ready to stem the tide of any bad custom or tyranny by staking everything. The enlightened India was not in the fashion of the Ramayana, when it was transformed into a dumb show of Royalty to guide the general public and when Rama Chandra had to satisfy his subjects by exiling the most faithful ideal wife, Sita, against his own conscience and promise. In the Mahabharata there are no such inconsistencies, but in the two sets of kings fighting one against the other lies the greatness of the Mahabharata. Human kings challenged the Fates by ignoring Heaven and their own good. Nature, the active spirit of the Creator, fights the great rebels, the Asuras, and levels them to the ground. The sage Markandeya sings of it in his great prayer book, Chandi. Fate laughs at many a mock

fight that a powerful tyrant launches against a worthy man. God comes to help the persecuted man, however weak and friendless he may be, with superior genius to help him stand on his own legs and carry out his work successfully. It was for this reason that the Indian Epics were called the Books of Success. The great Kshatriya warrior Kartabiryarjuna and the demon Ravana were mocked with many hands and heads, but could not withstand the onslaught of the great halberd of Parasurama and the arrows from the bow of Rama Chandra.

This was not all that the Mahabharata preached, for the cause of the mock fight between Drona and Drupada was to be repeated between the Kurus and the Pandavas. It was the affection for a son and the desire to improve his status and fulfil his ambition. Aswathama, the son of Drona, cried like a horse when he was born and that was the origin of his name, while Durjodhana in like manner cried like an ass. They were great friends. Yudhisthira and his brothers represented the true attributes of a king according to the institutes of Manu wherein the relationships with heavenly Gods were established. A king of those days represented something much superior to the general run of intelligent, enlightened men of the day, quite worthy of the latters' honour and devotion. Yudhisthira, born of a great family, was such a wise and enlightened prince, and was installed as the heir-apparent to the throne.

The Pandavas were the favourites of the people and were superior in every respect to the sons of Dhritarastra. The young Pandavas could easily have taken the throne of their father from their blind uncle Dhritarastra, but they did not like to do so since their father had asked him to reign in his place. The weak Dhritarastra was now thinking of taking undue advantage of this fact. Thinking is a pernicious habit of the weak. The old king was obsessed with one idea, how to seize the throne for his son Durjodhana. A king who had tired of his commitments usually retired to the forest to seek absolution for his sins of omission and commission. This was the usual life a Hindu king of ancient India lived after the age of fifty or so, but such was not the case with the old King Dhritarastra. He was not blessed with any boon of dying at will, like the fictitious Bhisma, or of everlasting life like Vyasa or Parasurama, yet he occupied the throne for a great length of time after the retirement and death of Pandu. He was not only lacking in sight but also in the moral and spiritual attributes of a king. Love is called the poetry of the senses.

The Pandavas were the fruits of love and not of human passion, which the author seeks to demonstrate in poetry by their connection with the gods above. Music is an art learnt from Dame Nature, which gave birth to language. It is for this reason that the animals cannot talk like men or feel like them. The objects around man enable him to grasp and realise the close relationship between the outside and inside of Dame Nature and her atmosphere around him. The great blessings of mankind can be acquired by control of the senses and not merely by their enjoyment. There is something beyond the usefulness of a thing in its material form which is known as an intellectual and spiritual atmosphere, and in this Yudhisthira and his brothers were initiated from their early childhood, a training rare amongst the princes of those days. It was this which justly entitled them to be called the sons of the gods above and not of the human king Pandu, however great he might have been. The Divine Minstrel, Narada, used to visit them in order to guide and help them in their hours of trouble and in their persecution. The thought of sitting on the throne of his departed father did not even cross the mind of Yudhisthira, though it oppressed his uncle for the sake of his son Durjodhana. This is the great contrast offered by the Mahabharata to elucidate the great virtues and vices of the contending parties, with their gradual growth and final development in the great battle. In this lies the greatness of the Mahabharata as opposed to the Ramayana. The mere incidents, without proper expositions of the aims, cannot be of any use and may only serve to misguide people.

The tongue of scandal in the amusing tale of the birth of the Pandavas, which the Kurus circulated, failed to persuade the people to join the side of the latter, as the King wished. The blameless conduct of the Pandavas and of their mother was enough to give the lie to the story. It rebounded on the party who circulated it. Durjodhana and his friends were very miserable, and Dhritarastra at last came to their rescue. Every man pursues happiness according to his own lights. Self-respect and a fine sense of the becoming were not to be expected from one who had led a life of adulation and power. Durjodhana himself did not want to do anything in the matter, as a burnt child dreads the fire, but laid bare his heart before his father. Aswathama, son of Drona and a rival of Arjuna, was easily won over by Durjodhana, and thus he ensured that neither Drona nor Kripa would leave his side. Bhisma was

neutral. Yet these men would not agree to place Durjodhana on the throne. Yudhisthira was the stumbling block and he must be removed. Dhritarastra hatched a plot under the advice of his minister Kanika, the Machiavel of the day, and Sakuni, the maternal uncle of Durjodhana. The popularity of the Pandavas, their powerful alliance, their prowess and right of birth were too strong to exile them openly by force, and therefore an artifice was necessary to ruin them. The ministers therefore began describing the city of Varanabata in glowing terms so as to excite the curiosity of the Pandavas and cause them to visit the place during the great festival of Siva, which was performed with great ceremony.

Siva-worship was then prevalent in India, for Drupada resorted to it when smarting under the great insult of his defeat by the pupils of Drona in the mock fight. Man leans on God when his own supports are gone. Nothing beautiful or true was born without a birth pang in those days in ancient India. Children were the great hopes of those days, and their births were the gifts of the Gods above. Siva was such a god. Yajati was restored to Heaven by his four grandsons by his daughter Madhabi. Dasaratha got four sons by a sacrifice, and it was not clearly known how exactly the Pandavas were born, except that Pandu retired to the forest to practise ascetism and the sages advised him that he must have children before he could go to the blissful region of Heaven. The births of the sons and daughter of the King of Panchal, Drupada, were said to have been from the worship of Siva and the performance of a sacrifice in honour of the God Hayagriba. The brief summary of it runs as follows:—Drupada thought of revenge and was anxious to redeem his lost kingdom. He was informed that Bhisma was instrumental in carrying the designs of Drona to success. He thought of divine help and went to the forest for advice from the great sages. He accordingly began the worship of God Siva and was blessed with the boon to destroy Bhisma only. A son was born who was found to be a hermaphrodite. He worshipped the great God and got his blessing, that the boy would gain his manhood in due time. He was advised by the God that to recover his lost kingdom he should employ the services of capable sages to perform a sacrifice. He went in search of one fit for the purpose and travelled in the woods for a long time, watching every ascetic there very carefully and cautiously.

None were found to be capable till at last he came to the

hermitage of Yaja and Upajaja on the banks of the Holy Ganges. They belonged to the family of Kasyapa. He began to serve them with all earnestness and, coming to know the superiority of Upajaja, he entreated him one day with a rich offer of presents to officiate as his priest in the performance of a sacrifice to bless him with a son capable of killing Drona. Upajaja would not consent to do such a thing, but being vexed with repeated entreaties for over a year he advised Drupada to approach his elder brother, who might be induced to take up the work, as by his behaviour he evinced a desire for earthly possessions. His words proved true. Yaja consented, but seeing the gravity of the task he consulted his brother and informed the king what would be necessary. Drupada, accompanied by his minister, returned joyfully to the capital and went through the sacrifice.

The prospect of happiness was not distant. The king and queen were called upon to join the minister at the end of the sacrifice to offer the last libation to the fire. The modest queen excused herself and failed to take part in it. No sooner was the last libation offered to the fire than the queen was delivered of a son and a daughter to the delight of all. This strange coincidence had a great effect on the minds of the king and the people at large. All extolled the sage. The son and daughter were reported to have come out of the fire itself. The citizens caught upon this imaginary tale and sent it forth to the vulgar masses in order to inspire them with a belief in the divinity of the children who were born to accomplish their ends. Drupada's joy knew no bounds as he was already blessed with Shikhundi, the destroyer of Bhisma, and then the appearance of the son Dhristya Dyumna and the girl Draupadi, the twins, dispelled all fears of Dronacharya and the Kurus. The king bestowed upon them all the necessary care for bringing them up as an ideal prince and princess. Drona was not left long in the dark as to the cause of the joy of the Panchals and their king. He brought the Panchal prince to his place and taught him the use of arms, more to keep him out of harm's way than to requite Drupada for the enjoyment of half his kingdom, for could a pupil think of killing his preceptor? The world would have been different if men had regarded Destiny as inevitable and left all to abide by the decrees of Fate itself.

The girl Draupadi, of matchless beauty and of high attainments, was to be given away in a Swayamvara. The Royalties of India were invited to witness the marriage ceremony, even if

not to try and win the prize. Great preparations were going on to make it a success worthy of the position of Drupada.

Children are born to satisfy parents, and the latter owe a duty to the former. Everything depends upon the bringing up of a child. They never come up to the standard of a parent's wish, unless their desires and wants are studied with a loving care and are sought to be met.

This was the Age when the Pousya and Astika Parvana were included as the necessary introductions to the Pouranic Mahabharata. The Gods descended from heaven to teach men their duties and women were greatly respected and Goddesses were worshipped by the Gods in the Puranas.

CHAPTER VII.

The Lac House.

The city of Baranavata lay 19 miles to the north-west of Mirat, now called Barnawat. This was one of the five villages demanded by Sri Krishna from Durjodhana for Yudhisthira in order to establish peace. The festival of Siva was performed with great ceremony and to witness the same Dhritarastra ordered the Pandavas and their mother to attend, as they had expressed a desire to do so through mutual friends.

Yudhisthira did not hesitate to obey the command. He scented something wrong, but could not do otherwise. His words at parting, " O bless us that we may be prosperous and sin may not touch us," indicate this. Dhritarastra thought he could do as he liked to advance his ambition for his son. In his own family his egotistical propensity was conspicuous and it ceased to offend anybody. If anybody did not act upon his words, he was guilty of the offence of disobeying the king, punishable by the laws of the land. Yadu, the eldest son of Yajati, was disinherited for this. Yudhisthira was aware of this and as a dutiful and obedient member of the family was bound to obey the king's command. The news spread like wild-fire and some foul play was suspected by the good citizens, and they began to talk ill of the old king. They were surprised that Bhisma did not take any action in the matter. They followed the Pandavas with Vidura at their head, crying shame on the king and his sons, saying, " Alas! this is the return for Pandu's kindness in allowing Dhritarastra to sit on the throne! "

"Be not grieved, good citizens!" Yudhisthira replied. "Do not rise against your king and our father, worthy of our regard! It is your duty as well as ours to obey his command. Friends! return to your homes and make us happy. If you are at all desirous of doing us a good turn, this is not the fit time for it."

The citizens had no other alternative but to retire with heavy hearts as Yudhisthira refused to rise against the king. But Vidura continued to follow them. The sympathy of the people moved the hearts of the Pandavas, and Yudhisthira, now seeing Vidura alone, addressed him :

"O Father! teach me the duties of a prince, surrounded on all sides by powerful foes. How should he deal with his friends and enemies, if friends become enemies? Let me know the fit time either for waging war or for making peace with them."

Vidura gladly replied that one should make the intelligent and the wise his friends, and for the sake of his welfare should not mind making friends even with his enemy. He recited this old story to illustrate his advice:—

"A mouse, seeing its enemy the cat in a trap, began to move very freely over the entrapped animal and eat its flesh with great joy. But suddenly its face turned pale on finding a dreadful mongoose and an owl on the branch above looking wistfully at it. It realised the seriousness of the situation but did not lose its wits. Addressing the cat it offered to save its life, if the cat in turn gave immediate shelter to the mouse. The cat agreed. Seeing the mouse thus sheltered, the mongoose and the owl left the place. The cat then called upon the mouse to perform immediately its promised task. The mouse, however, was well aware of the right moment for it. The cat continued to profess its friendship, but it was not freed from the trap until the hunter came in sight. The mouse entered its hole and the cat fled for its life without any thought of doing any harm to the mouse."

"Thus, though they were enemies, they saved themselves by sound judgment and wisdom. It is only through a combination of circumstances and personal interest that one becomes another's friend or enemy in this world. Fear begets circumspection. He lives who knows the aims of his enemies and avoids dangers. A fool only thinks of weapons of steel and poison as being the only things that can injure him, and does not provide against fire or tempest. A jackal is safe in its den. The consumer of straw and wood cannot touch the inmate of a hole. He who keeps his five senses under control is never overcome by danger or by his enemies. Brahmans are the great teachers of the day. They are grateful and you should always adore them. Their company, their benediction and their instruction can never go for nothing. They all have self-control and you must know that self-control alone endows one with the sovereignty of the world. A traveller is guided by the stars, and self-control endows man with a clear conscience, which is the best guide for a man. Brahmans are capable of conferring great benefits, and on their goodwill depend kingdom, fame, alliances and all success."

The words of Vidura were significant in view of what followed. To cut the Gordian knot, to emerge from the difficulties and to secure the throne of his father (Pandu), Yudhisthira should seek the help of the Brahmans. Such was the wise advice of Vidura, who took leave of them with these words. The feelings of the Pandavas can be better imagined than described. A silent look of affection and regard, when all others have turned from you, is after all a great comfort; a firm hold in the worst affliction, which no wealth could purchase or power bestow. Vidura did not retire until he was thoroughly convinced that Yudhisthira understood fully what he wished to convey to him.

Durjodhana was exceedingly happy now, for he had already despatched his trustworthy servant to prepare everything and to greet the Pandavas there in a house specially made for the purpose and stocked with all the luxuries that a king could desire. Hope is the miserable man's God, which in the hardest grip of calamity never fails to give him beams of comfort. To the presumptuous man it is a devil. How many have died by hoping too much! Hope is to a man as a bladder to one learning to swim; it keeps him from sinking in the bosom of the sea, but when a storm rises he sinks.

" The rose is fairest when 'tis budding new,
And hope is brightest when it drowns from fears,"

With such hope the heart of Durjodhana was beating and conscience forsook him and his father.

But to Yudhisthira this incident did not appear so embarrassing as it would have been to an ordinary man. One cannot describe his condition better than in the words of the pious Thomas A'Kempis—" It is good for man to suffer the adversity of this earthly life, for it brings him back to the sacred retirement of the heart, where he finds he is in exile from his native home and ought not to place his trust in any worldly enjoyment. It is good for him also to meet with contradiction and reproach and to be evil thought of and evil spoken of, even when his intentions are upright and his actions blameless, for it keeps him humble and is a powerful antidote to the poison of vain glory, and then chiefly it is that we have recourse to the witness within us, which is God, when we are outwardly despised and held in no degree of esteem and favour among men."

" Some have Me often in their mouths, but little in their hearts. Others there are who, being illuminated in their understanding, and purged in their affection, do always aspire

after things Eternal, are unwilling to hear of the things of this world, and do serve the necessities of Nature with grief; and these perceive what the spirit of truth speaketh in them. For He teacheth them to despise earthly, and love heavenly things; to neglect the world, and to desire heaven all the day and night."

Had it not been so, Yudhisthira would have been overwhelmed with grief and would have done something against his uncle, especially when the people offered him help. He had such a powerful brother as Sri Krishna, his family and other admirers backing him, but was quite unconcerned and gladly obeyed his uncle, however unjust his words had been. He informed his mother clearly of what Vidura had told him. The Pandavas and their mother did not express any grief over it. They were all very glad that now the world would be able to judge the Kurus in their true colours and God would give them an opportunity to secure the throne easily in the near future. They placed strict reliance in Divine dispensation. This bears ample testimony to their school of discipline and culture. This was the fee the Pandavas paid to their great preceptor, King Dhritarastra, who advised them to witness the Siva festival at the place of their exile and perish by his tricks, thus fulfilling his full desire. They were not afraid and knew how to avert danger when it came.

" Why will ye toil and take such care
For children's children yet unborn
And garner store of strife and scorn
To gain a scarce remembered name,
Cumbered with lies and soiled with shame?"

Whoever believes that the Almighty may appear as an enemy for a time but will ultimately prove an eternal friend, he alone can set his feet on the neck of all fears and cry, " Distress and adversity are the way to His kingdom."

With this moral courage Yudhisthira, accompanied by his brothers and mother, went to the city of Baranavata. The citizens welcomed them with due ceremony. The Pandavas first visited the houses of the Brahmans, then those of the officials and prominent citizens. At last Purochana led them to the place of residence he had built for them. The food, drink, fittings and furniture were all that could be desired—every comfort was provided with due care. There was nothing to excite the least suspicion and nothing was left wanting. Purochana spoke in high terms of the house, but the intelligent

Yudhisthira quickly found out what it was made of. He warned his brothers and exhorted them to put on an appearance of cheerfulness rather than anxiety, lest Purochana, coming to know that his plan was discovered, would take immediate steps to destroy them before they could find a means of escape.

"Let us remain here, being very careful and cautious, and try to deceive the author in the best manner possible. If we fly from this place out of fear, Durjodhana with his father and friends will set spies and bring ruin upon us. They must think that they have succeeded in their attempts. It would be wise that our enemies could not follow us. This should be the plan and policy," said Yudhisthira to his brothers in confidence, and he called upon them to secretly dig subterranean passages in their rooms for escape in an emergency. Vidura also did not forget to send a miner to effect their escape from the house.

Purochana was glad to find that the Pandavas were happy and he was convinced that they could not discover the plot. Yudhisthira thought this to be the right moment for action. His mother fed a large number of Brahmans and inhabitants of the place and distributed wealth and valuables among the needy and poor. When the whole place was dark and night advanced, with the wind blowing hard and Purochana fast asleep, the Pandavas with their mother, having taken food and drink with them, entered the subterranean passage and set fire to the infernal place. Very shortly the fury of the fire lit up the whole countryside. All efforts to extinguish it proved ineffective.

The people soon discovered that the place was made of an inflammable material. The plot of the vicious blind king was brought to light and the people were very indignant and furious. They foamed at the mouth at the name of Dhritarastra or of his son, and even the dutiful Bhisma was not spared. The Pandavas had not forgotten to keep six dead bodies in the house, before leaving, to convince the wicked designer of the plot that they were all dead. The news spread abroad throughout the kingdom and all the details of the fiendish design for the destruction of the innocent Pandavas were laid bare. The whole kingdom was agog with excitement and public indignation ran very high. The people began to abuse the King and the court openly. Purochana paid the penalty for his crime, being burnt to death as he richly deserved. The king tried in vain to convince

the people that he was innocent and piteously expressed his grief in loud lamentations. Friends and relations were duly informed of the incident and a public funeral with all the regal pomp then in vogue was ordered, to prove the sincerity of his heart and to pay due honour to the departed great. But all this could not remove the impression of the public, nor could the king expose the evil perpetrator and prove his own innocence. Vasudeva, the uterine brother of Kunti and father of Sri Krishna, grieved to hear of the disaster, and immediately despatched a messenger to attend the funeral ceremony and to find out what had actually happened and what could be done. It did not take Vasudeva long to find out the real truth and he was relieved to learn of their escape from Vidura, who had made every arrangement for it. He did not disclose this to anybody. Everything passed off without a hitch and the blind king with his son and friends were greatly relieved at heart and highly elated, being thus successful in their scheme for securing the throne for good.

The Pandavas with their mother safely came out of the infernal place and, unobserved, crossed the holy Ganges in a fast sailing boat to a safe place. They were not aware of what had happened to Purochana and were anxious about his fate, lest Durjodhana might come to know that he had not set fire to the house. Dismissing the boatmen who conveyed them over, the Pandavas conveyed their sincere thanks to Vidura through them. They retired into the dense forest in the darkness. Born and brought up in mountain fastnesses and the woods, they took shelter under the spreading branches of a big tree, thinking of the sleepless nights they passed on costly beds in the terrible house they had left, whereas sleep now came to them on the bare ground of a place both fearful and dismal.

Yudhisthira was the solitary exception. His own temperament, which, in the days of early childhood had schooled him properly between spiritual striving and material gain, had, with the change of fortune, rapidly hardened into the character of a wordly man for whom all the speculations on unforeseen forces working around the human destiny seemed to be mere folly. He would have laughed to scorn any one who had then presumed to talk to him about the law of Eternal Justice which, with individuals and nations, works for all time towards good and against evil. But Yudhisthira had something of the Divine element left in him, which he had not

corrupted by his own selfish desires and wickedness. There is an old saying amongst the Christians, " There never was a Christian save One and He was crucified." The great Vyasa, the author of the Mahabharata, has presented a more finished example than that in Yudhisthira. He was really a magnificent masterpiece of the ancient Hindu religious world. The world has seen an emblem of the true soul and spirit of the love in God above within Yudhisthira, whose influence in his kingdom reflected his virtues so that they did not require public advertisement. His brothers followed him like lambs. Only Bhima sprang a surprise now and then, out of sheer sincerity of heart and inward grief at wrongs. He began to realise in his brothers' company what is the true value of resignation to the great will of God Almighty.

How Yudhisthira administered advice to them might be of some interest in the description of their change of life. Bhima, the most powerful of all, squeezed his palms and sighed at not being able to do anything in the matter, because of his brother's kind and forgiving nature throughout all these years. Yudhisthira pacified his brothers in their hour of trial, saying they should not forget the sound maxim, "A readiness to forgive offences bespeaks meekness joined with benignity, while an eagerness to retaliate indicates anger mingled with some portion of hatred and malice; the former dignifies, the latter degrades the character. None is a greater tormentor of self than a malignant and revengeful man, for he turns the poison of his own temper in upon himself. A spirit of revenge is the legacy to man of Satan, and not of God."

These words brought tears to the eyes of the brothers and pacified them. They were not left long ruminating over the subject, for sleep overtook them one after another till only Bhima watched. Alas! Yudhisthira preferred the life of a hunter to that of a prince; he preferred to live in peace in the woods with the wild beasts than to sit in a palace full of courtiers and enemies. He wished to live apart from his jealous cousins who fell an easy prey to the advice of the minister, Kanika.

Things were quite different in the Kuru Court. Dhritarastra, interested as he had been in his son's ambition, sought the advice of Kanika and followed the Machiavellian policy of destroying the Pandavas by underhand means. This minister rose in the estimation of the king and his sons. His principles

and policy were followed and practised by the king and the princes of the day. Durjodhana had learnt his lessons from his parents and instructors. Conscience is in every breast until extinguished by repeated opposition and neglect. On his advice, large presents were distributed among the people to pacify them. Bhisma was won over by Durjodhana on the advice of Kanika. It is said that a man loses his sense just before his day of doom. Bhisma could not have winked at this incident so easily, had not Drupada prayed to God above for his destruction, and to be blessed with a son to fulfil his purpose.

Never perhaps in the whole history of the country had the political, social, and religious outlook been more gloomy. It needed no comet to foretell national disaster. The bad seed of attachment to a wicked son was now bearing its bitter fruit. A wave of vice seemed to pass over the country; it became the fashion. A brave and outspoken man like Vidura, who would not wink at wickedness even in high places, proved nearly powerless and was unable to stem the current of fierce, selfish, intolerance and blind indifference to the sufferings of others. Worst of all, there sprang up the gross, heartless, cunning and selfish materialism of Kanika, the atheism of Charvaka, the tyranny and blatant wickedness of kings seeking for power and wealth. As to the religious outlook, it was no less gloomy.

Drona with his family had been reigning as a king instead of teaching religion or taking up arms against the act of tyranny which had apparently resulted in the murder of his beloved pupils, Arjuna and his brothers, to whom he owed his kingdom and comfort. Satan casting out Satan, from the king who wantoned on his throne to the slave who blasphemed beneath his fetters. The lust of youth, the intrigues of courtiers, were stronger than the warning voice of God. Drona could not go against the wishes of his beloved son Aswathama, who was a great friend of Durjodhana. Liars were thanked for lying, hypocrites took pride in their hypocrisy, while sinners cheered them to unnatural deeds. Every attempt at reform became the parent of worse scandals, every devil who was exorcised returned with seven others worse than itself. Falsehood and spite, selfishness and lust, and confusion were seven times confounded.

But in this welter of vice there stood out one figure, the wonder of the world, the incarnation of virtue and love, showing up the world in its true colours, teaching his brothers how

to deal out mercy that it might bring God's reprisals on man's tyranny. No thought of revenge ever disturbed him. Bodily injury or pain could not touch his mind. He was aware of his relation to the spiritual world and was ever mindful of advancing its cause rather than that of the material world. He showed the world by his example and following that temperance and action were necessary instead of total abstinence or mere religious thought. He taught his brothers lessons of self-denial—outwardly so degrading—that righteousness was to love, to help, to suffer for, and, if need be, to die for those who, in themselves, seemed fit to arouse no feelings other than indignation and disgust.

"It is not but the tempest that doth show
The seaman's cunning; but the field that tries
The captain's courage; and we come to know
Best what men are in their worst jeopardies;
For lo, how many have we seen to grow
To high renown from lowest miseries,
Out of the hands of death, and many a one
T'have been undone, had not they been undone."

Yudhisthira lived the life of a martyr by choice, and there lay his greatness and glory. The great Vyasa's conception of Yudhisthira as an ideal monarch of ancient India was to cause his memory to live for all time as an example of what was meant by going to Heaven in person. There was no question of resurrection among the sons of God in Hindu religion. But if you seek it anywhere in the books of religion it may be said to be found here in the Lac House of Baranavata, either in the poetry of fiction or in the facts of history, as you like to take it. Yudhisthira represented to the world nothing but righteousness. He reaped no personal advantage from it nor gave anything to God. He did not assume the authority of a teacher or a guide. What he did was only to glorify the great God above. Man envies the happiness of rich and great men, but little does he know the inward canker that eats out all their joys and delights. Wealth and kingdom, acquired by fraud and violence, generally make the possessors avaricious and miserable. Babylon exists in name only, the fate of Rome is no less unenviable, and not a pillar of Nineveh remains to mark her ancient grandeur. But the moral endowments of man do not suffer amidst the passing of years but remain firm and indestructible. The world of mind is shadowed forth in that of matter, just as Eternity is reflected in Time.

Every man endowed with reason can store his mind with ideal images so as to be able to connect sentiment with matter in nearly all its varieties of form. This is not idolatory. Yudhisthira, as it were, was the mainspring of the other Pandavas, and moved amidst the shadows of coming Eternity just to teach them how to control their throbbing passions of blood and flesh. The Lac House of Baranavata was really the resurrection of the Pandavas, and great credit must be given to the wisdom of Vidura and Yudhisthira, who were said to be the incarnations of Virtue and Yama, the great dispenser of justice on the day of judgment after death.

The great fault of the Pandavas would appear to have been that they were not guilty of any crime rendering them punishable by the king. They were the stumbling blocks to Durjodhana's ambition to ascend the throne of his father. There was but one way in which the Pandavas could be removed. No political charge could be formulated against them, so the Lac House plot was hatched. Purochana, the wicked minister, was burnt. The God Siva, who presided over the material world, was said to be master of destruction and death. This was retributive justice, and the Pandavas emerged as the resurrected sons of God about whose divinity stories were set afloat by the general public when they learnt of their miraculous escape from death in the Lac House. Drona had become the creature of circumstances. His subsequent career was the outcome of the history of events. It must be understood that hypocrisy is a homage which vice pays to virtue.

Chapter VIII.

Forest Life of the Pandavas.

"You complain that life is lonely here, mother," exclaimed Yudhisthira. "You may be right, mother, that marriage and kingdom are necessary for the happiness of worldly life. Mother, we were not all born in the place of our father's kingdom. We were accustomed to a forest life from our very infancy. Solitude is not actual loneliness; there are the birds and beasts who are our old comrades, the fruits and flowers which appease our hunger and give us the fragrance of God's heaven." He looked up to the placid sky above and continued, "All will come, in good time, as fruits and flowers come in time. Work is a good comrade. We must all wait. First deserve, then desire, is a golden maxim. Pray for him who dares not pray for himself. Bless us, mother, that we may not be led astray by our misery." His eyes had gleams of fire, his words were uttered with feelings of ease and tenderness. The mother cried out, "O God help me! You are all brought up to my expectation. God must give you field for action. You are not now infants that you require a mother's assistance and knowledge to help you to surmount difficulties. You are far too modest in your career of life. Men make their own choice and form their own futures. You are all free to choose them. Through pain and enduring labour the soul is armed for battle. I know and you know. Starvation is better than self-indulgence. Genius is bestowed on you not for the benefit of your personal gratification but for the amelioration of the thousands who will be entrusted to your care. When self is prominent the world is totally corrupt. You have all seen with your own eyes in the case of your uncle and cousins. Their love is mockery, and God and good are forgotten. The soul of the mother who bore you and brought you up wishes to see you live for ages." Her countenance grew sublime, her eyes shining with lustrous flame of fire.

Yudhisthira, lowering his head to his mother to accept her benediction with all his brothers, said:—"Mother is an emblem of true love on the earth below, and God is in the spirit within.

The deer, it fights for its fawn; the bird, it toils for its nestlings; and even the spider will rather die than drop its bag of eggs. Know at least that, unless one suffers for the object of his love, true love cannot be manifest. The origin of true love is self-sacrifice. The common soldier goes to the field of battle to lay down his life for country and his neighbours, orphans and children, to save them from misery and extortion. Man in misery and bereavement looks up to Heaven. Everything in this world depends on mutual help and co-operation. Moral improvements are brought about generally through the influence of those who have put themselves in contact with such fellow-men who are engaged in a world-wide search for goodwill and wealth. The spirit of God is the spirit of love, wisdom and justice. If any man wishes to be truly wise and just, the only way to attain it seems to be by love and charity. A king, a judge and an apostle: each is judged by his individual success in this world. A king must understand his subjects and their wants, before he can love them and rule them by love and not by the iron hand of law. A judge must know the circumstances, before he can administer the law of the land. A man who kills another in self-defence does not commit any crime. An apostle must know God and His unselfish love towards all created beings, before he can preach the religion of God acceptable to man. He must have a clear knowledge of the laws of creation, that everything on earth is ordained to help others and not to help himself. The sun, the moon, the stars, the planets, all rotate day and night with the earth; the seasons come and go without a break; the clouds move and disappear in rain and again grow into vapour, rising from below; the streams flow down to be lost in the ocean; the flowers and fruits and corn and vegetables grow in the soil to supply food for the world and not with any selfish motive for their own use. The soil patiently bears the thrust of the spade and the sharp edges of the plough. There is a sort of lesson to be learnt from the basic principles of creation. There lies the true knowledge of things in creation, and one must learn of human nature before he can influence it. The understanding of men and their ways is the chief study for a king, a judge and an apostle in this world. There is nothing so blind as cruelty, nothing so weak as violence or intrigue. By patience, courtesy and gentleness one can make himself stronger—and by attracting the general sympathy of the people at large who will gladly follow him. This is the practical

method of making others obey and securing their love and sympathy. This is the spirit with which I am identified in my trials and nothing else. I do not like to rebel against the poor uncle who is really blind. I pity him in his old age and bear no grudge against him or his sons, so wicked and vile. They are to be pitied, and I tried my very best to correct them but failed, by reason of the company they keep. Mother, do not blame me for it."

Kunti, the mother of Yudhisthira, embraced her great son in joy and blessed him from the bottom of her heart. The brothers, learning the true cause of Yudhisthira's action in submitting to the wishes of the cruel Dhritarastra and his sons and ministers, fell at his feet. Yudhisthira touched the feet of his mother and embraced his brothers, raising them from the ground one by one. This was the love and homage which Yudhisthira received from them in the forest, a homage of which anyone might be proud. It converted the forest life into a true heaven. It is a pity this is not mentioned in the Mahabharata, which, instead, emphasises the killing of cannibals and demons by Bhima, who saved not only his brothers and mother from their hands but also the people of the neighbouring countries of the great dense jungles of India. This does not prove that the Punjab was the first Aryan settlement in India. There is a sort of affinity in the Ramayana and the Mahabharata in this life of exile and in the killing of these uncivilised cannibals, who were all very powerful creatures and played havoc with peaceful citizens.

Kunti's greatness was nowhere so prominent as when she readily gave permission to Bhima to save the only son of a Brahman family, in whose house they all took shelter after leaving the forest. There they came to know the state of things from the Brahman householder, whose turn it was to supply human flesh and food to the most powerful cannibal Baka. There was a weak king in a place called Vatrakeya Griha who relied on the strength of Baka to defend his kingdom and had to supply him with daily food, one cartload of rice, two buffaloes and the man who took them to him. The inhabitants were called upon to supply this in turn, and if anyone tried to avoid it he would be devoured with his whole family. The piteous cries of the whole family drew the sympathy of the great Kunti, who gladly offered her own son Bhima to take the food to the powerful Baka, in place of her host's son. Here are the words of Kunti from the Mahabharata :—

" O Brahmana, my firm opinion is that Brahmanas must be

protected always. If I had one hundred sons, none of them would be less dear to me. But this Rakshasha will not be able to kill my son. My son is powerful, energetic and learned in Mantras. He will deliver the food to the Rakshasha, but he will be able to save himself; this is my firm belief. I have seen before that many powerful and huge Rakshashas came to my son and were killed at his hands. O Brahmana, do not by any means disclose this to anybody; for then people, being curious and desirous of learning (their power), will trouble my sons. The opinion of the learned men is that if my son gives this knowledge (to others) without the assent of his preceptor, he will no longer be able to profit by it.* "

Yudhisthira did not at first agree to this proposal of his mother and the conversation between them was as follows:—
" The son of Pandu, Yudhisthira, learnt of the affair by the appearance of Bhima, and sitting by his mother, he spoke thus to her in private.

" Yudhisthira said:—' What is the work that the greatly powerful Bhima wants to perform? Does he wish to do it by your command or of his own will? ' "

" Kunti said:—' By my request the chastiser of foes (Bhima) will do this great deed for the sake of the Brahmana and in order to save the town (from the Rakshasha).' "

" Yudhisthira said:—' What rash act has been done by you! It is a very difficult work. The learned men never praise the abandonment of one's own son. Why do you wish to abandon him, your own son? Why do you wish to abandon your son for the sake of another's son? You have done an act which is not approved by men or by the Vedas. It is by the strength of his arms we all sleep in comfort and hope to recover the kingdom of which we have been deprived by the wretches (Durjodhana and others). Remembering whose great prowess, Durjodhana with Sakuni and all others do not sleep (for a moment) in the night from anxiety; by whose heroic prowess we were rescued from the burning house of lac, and other dangers; by whom Purochana was killed, relying on whose prowess, we believe ourselves that we have already acquired this earth full of wealth and have killed the sons of Dhritarastra, on what consideration have you resolved upon abandoning him? Have you been deprived of your reason? Have you lost your senses on account of our calamities? ' "

* The Mbh., Adi Parvan, Chapter CLXIII, verses 13-18, p. 229.

"Kunti said:—'O Yudhisthira, you need not be anxious for Vrikodara. I have not resolved (to do it) out of any weakness of my understanding. O son, our grief being assuaged, we live happily in the house of this Brahmana, unknown to the sons of Dhritarastra and much respected by him. O Partha, I have resolved upon doing this in order to requite him, for he is a (true) man upon whom good service is never lost. It is (always) proper that the requital should be greater than the service received. Seeing the great prowess of Bhima in the house of lac, and in killing Hidimba, my confidence in Vrikodara is great. The strength of Bhima's arms is as great as that of ten thousand elephants. It was therefore that he was able to carry you, all as heavy as elephants, from Baranavata. There is none so strong as Vrikodara; he may even vanquish in battle the thunderer (Indra) himself. As soon as he was born, he fell from my lap on the stone. The mass of stone on which he fell was broken into pieces by the weight of his body. O Pandava, from that day I have come to know the (great) strength of Bhima. Therefore, I am desirous of requiting (the services) of the Brahmana. I have not done this from foolishness, from ignorance, or from any motive of gain. I have deliberately resolved to do this virtuous act. O Yudhisthira, two objects will be gained by this act, one is the requital of the Brahmana's services (to us) and the other is the acquisition of great religious merit.* '"

"Yudhisthira said:—'O mother, what you have deliberately done, moved by compassion for the afflicted Brahmana, is indeed excellent. Because you are compassionate for the Brahmana, Bhima will certainly come back after killing the cannibal. But tell the Brahmana that he must not do anything by which the people of this town may know all about it. You must carefully make him promise it.'"

"When the night passed away, the Pandava, Bhimasena, taking with him the food (for the Rakshasha) set out for the place where the cannibal dwelt. Reaching the forest in which the Rakshasha lived, the very strong Pandava (Bhima) began to eat the food himself and called loudly on the Rakshasha by name. He came in wrath to the place where Bhima was. Seeing Bhima engaged in eating his food the Rakshasha spoke thus in anger and with eyes expanded and lips bitten:—'Who is the fool that desires to go to the land of the dead by eating in my very sight the food intended for me!'"

* The Mbh., Adi Parvan, Chapter CLXIV, verses 2-21, pp. 229-230.

"Being filled with great displeasure, he (the Rakshasha) struck a heavy blow with both his hands on the back of the son of Kunti, Vrikodara. Though Bhima was struck with great force by the arms (of the Rakshasha), yet he did not even look at him, but he continued to eat. Thereupon he (the Rakshasha) became very angry, tore up a tree and ran at the strong Bhima to strike him again. That best of men, the very strong Bhima, leisurely ate up all the food, and then washing himself he stood up cheerfully to fight. O descendant of Bharata! the very powerful Bhima smilingly caught in his left hand the tree hurled in anger (by the Rakshasha). The fight with trees between the man and the Rakshasha became so fearful that the place soon became devoid of all trees. Saying 'I am no other than Vaka', the Rakshasha sprang upon the Pandava and clasped the very powerful Bhima by both his arms. Bhimasena also clasped the Rakshasha by his strong arms. The mighty hero began to drag him violently. Then placing one knee in the middle of his back, Bhima seized his neck with his right hand and his waist-cloth with his left; he then broke him into two with great force. He (the cannibal) then uttered a fearful yell. Then the Rakshasha, when he was thus fearfully broken by Bhima, vomited blood. Vaka, huge as a mountain, being thus broken by Bhima, died uttering fearful yells. Terrified by that noise, the relatives of that Rakshasha with their attendants came out of their houses. Seeing them terrified and deprived of reason, that best of all wielders of arms, the strong Bhima, comforted them and made them promise. Bhima said :—'Do not again kill men. If you do it, you will be killed like this (Vaka).' Those Rakshashas gave the desired promise by saying 'Be it so.' Then Bhima took the dead cannibal and placed him at one of the gates (of the city) unobserved by anyone. He then went away. Seeing Vaka killed by Bhima and his extraordinary strength, the kinsmen (of the Rakshasha) became frightened and fled in different directions. Then Bhima, thus killing him (Vaka), returned to the house of the Brahmana and described to the prince (Yudhisthira) in detail all that had happened. The next morning the inhabitants of the town, in coming out, saw that Rakshasha lying dead on the ground, his body covered with blood.*"

The happy intelligence of Vaka's death spread like wild fire. Kunti was never found wanting in this. She saw

* The Mbh., Adi Parvan, Chapter CLXV, verses 1-6, 9-10, 14-18, 20-22, 27-28 and The Mbh., Adi Parvan, Chapter CLXVI, verses 1-5 and 7-9, pp. 230-31.

which way the wind was blowing and finding her sons desirous of witnessing the festival, spoke out:—" It is not good for us to live so long in one place, specially after the death of Vaka. I fear we are taxing too much the generosity of our host. The place and time seem quite monotonous and you just listened to the interesting accounts of the Panchals, what fine arrangements are made to provide the strangers with food and drink, how the King is devoted to the Brahmans and what a lavish entertainment it is going to prove. If you care to see the place at all and think it good for us to go there, let us leave this place." Yudhisthira replied:—" What else can be of greater good to us than that which you find beneficial? " They all agreed that they would start for the Capital of the Panchalas, bidding adieu to the Brahmana. But they were only awaiting the arrival of Vyasa. He at last made his appearance. He was apprised of their intention and highly approved of it. He, grandfather as he was to them, entertained them with the story of the princess's life in her previous birth. " There lived in a wood a girl of exquisite beauty and rare virtue—the daughter of an illustrious sage. Finding no suitable match for herself, she began to perform severe penances. Thus propitiated, the God Siva called upon her to ask for a boon. Overpowered with joy she repeated her request five times over. The God blessed her to have five husbands. She protested and begged of him to reconsider, but in vain. That girl was born in the house of Drupada. Go there. You may win her and be undoubtedly happy." With these words he left them.

Narada, the messenger of God, appeared to the Pandavas at Ekchakra, and he communicated to them the news of Draupadi's marriage with due instructions. (Anudyuta Parvan, Chap. 78.) Narada took a leading part in the marriage of Draupadi, not only by being present at the Swayamvara (Chap. 189, Sloka 7), but it was he who told the world about Draupadi's marriage with the other four Pandavas one after another, after due ceremony with Yudhisthira, and of the wonderful incident. In Chap. CC., Sloka 14, Vaishampayana said:—" The celestial sage Narada told me of the very wonderful incident of Draupadi's regaining her virginity day after day."

The Pandavas passed through many dales and forests with their mother, and one delightful evening they came near the banks of the Ganges. There the king of the Gandharvas, Chitraratha, was sporting in the holy waters with his queens. He heard the approaching footsteps and felt annoyed, and defied

the Pandavas. Arjuna took up the gauntlet, and made him feel the strength of his arms. Seizing him by the hair he dragged him before his brother. Seeing Chitraratha in imminent danger, his queens begged Yudhisthira to spare his life, and the latter instantly called upon his brother to set his captive free. Thus released, Chitraratha desired their friendship with offers of presents of beautiful horses and the wonderful science of Chakshushi, which acquaints one with the true nature of things in the world. In return, he asked to be invested with the Agneya weapon, the use of firearms. Arjuna flatly refused to accept these terms as it would be placing a price on the deliverance and selling an act of generosity. Further, he would not even consider accepting until the Gandharva explained his conduct in taking the aggressor's part when they met each other. Chitraratha satisfied Arjuna that he offered the presents out of love and that no man would put up with ill-treatment, especially before his wives, while they had neither wives nor Brahmans walking before them nor kept a fire, facts which lowered them in his estimation. The mere accident of birth in a noble race or an act of bravery could hardly entitle one to the esteem of the world. It was the successful life which commanded respect. Of the lives of their forefathers the sages sang. From them they should have learnt the great lesson that none could be crowned with success unless he had a priest capable, not only of protecting his possessions but of increasing them, without sacrificing his spiritual welfare in this life or in the next. He only wished them to follow the worthy footsteps of their forefathers and did not mean to offend them. They should remember that they had succeeded in defeating him only because they had practised "Brahmacharya." But how excellent would it have been had they a priest, as their forefathers had, who was a master of himself and of the Vedas, learned in all the precepts, pure, truthful and virtuous.

These wholesome words were not lost upon the Pandavas. Thus enlightened as to the services of a priest and of what their forefathers did in a similar predicament, they grew anxious to find a man who could be their priest and requested their friend to name any person fit for the purpose. He mentioned the name of Dhaumya, the brother of Vevala, engaged in ascetic penances in a shrine in the forest called Utkochak. Arjuna initiated the Gandharva king in the use of the Agneya weapon and desired him to present those splendid horses afterwards. The Pandavas bade him adieu and repaired to the hermitage of

Dhaumya, who, pleased with their humility, manners and learning, gladly accepted their offers of fruits and flowers, herbs and roots. They informed him of their desire to make him their priest to regain their kingdom through his good offices. He saw no objection in accepting, but at the same time observed that the acquisition and the preservation of a kingdom entirely depended upon the energy of a prince himself. Only the invincible fears could be removed by the exertion of a priest. Dhaumya accepted the office of priest with due ceremonies and agreed to accompany them to the court of King Drupada to witness the Swayamvara ceremony of the Princess Draupadi as they desired. It has been said that the Pandavas received a visit from the illustrious Veda Vyasa, who commanded them to go there as he too was going. Yudhisthira was in no way afraid of going, but he was thinking of his brother Bhima, who he feared would not let Durjodhana go unmolested after what had happened and Durjodhana would surely be there with his great friend Karna. He did not like to offend anybody, even in thought. He admonished Bhima properly. He was thinking out the best means of disclosing their indentity there, for he did nothing in his life that later he would be ashamed of. This might equally be said of his brothers. But the great question which puzzled him was to do it without a fight, or provoking one ultimately. He was greatly relieved, therefore, when he learned that Sri Krishna, Balarama and a host of kings would be there as well as a great body of sages, including Vyasa. He made every necessary arrangement for the visit in consultation with his newly appointed priest.

Youth is an age when all men and women take shape in their greatness or wickedness. It is an age when every man and woman feels lonely and seeks a happy companion. There are men and women who are intensely absorbed in their personal ease and comfort, having an absurd confidence in their own supreme wisdom. This is natural, but in those chivalrous days of ancient India it was not so. The princes generally were educated, tender and chivalrous and women were accomplished, adoring and devoted. There was something extraordinary in those days in the marriage ceremony of great Indian princes. There was a sort of joy and sorrow for the princes and kings of India, as these matrimonial alliances were more political than social. What a time it was! This made Yudhisthira think seriously over the consequences of their disclosure after their disappearance from the burning Lac House, for this would

be the first meeting of the Kurus with the Pandavas, whom they thought they had destroyed by their plot. This was the question which was troubling him and he decided all these details in consultation with the illustrious Vyasa, under whose advice the Pandavas assumed the guise of Brahmanas. This was a great event in Yudhisthira's life. There is another side of his life as a youth, how love developed in him. The child loves its mother and nurse. The boy loves his sister and brother with whom he plays.

The Indian princes and princesses were then no ordinary mortals. They were made to love their duties and functions and the important mission in life to which they would be called in the future. The exercise of free-will and conscience are the instruments which make one great and noble and the other a tyrant and ignoble. Epic literature and characters grew in the advanced philosophic age of the Vedanta system, with which the author of the Mahabharata was identified. The laws of Manu were then in vogue. Custom was not everything. This must be the keynote to all readings of the important events of the great Epic. Yudhisthira and his brothers were the *beau-ideals* of the age, a fact which should not be lost sight of. Women were respected in every sphere of life and enjoyed full freedom of thought and action. They were greatly responsible for the advancement of civilisation in ancient India. Kunti illustrated the duties of a mother, Madhabi those of a daughter, and to be the ideal wife of Yudhisthira and sister to his brothers would be the duty of the woman he was seeking, so as to relieve the fears of his old mother and guarantee the domestic happiness of the family. Nor was this all. She would be helpful in recovering the kingdom Yudhisthira had lost by the past events. Yudhisthira must find such a worthy wife. He was then not happy, as he was oppressed with all these considerations. The marriage of a prince of ancient India was not a question of the ordinary alliance of a man and a woman in the nuptial ties of the religious Vedic ceremonies of seven steps. Marriage was not a social function only, nor was it a gamble of life. Yudhisthira and his brothers never sought to play to the gallery like the Kurus. They were all sincere, devoted, dutiful and accomplished princes, ever ready to sacrifice their very existence in the service of the country and religion. They would never agree to do anything which was against their own conscience and the law of the land, and it was for this reason that they were exiled and were surrounded and beset by intrigue. This is what

the great Epic seeks to depict in the incidents of their life in the forest. They stood against the persecutions of the uncivilised demons like Vaka and Hidimba, and civilised them by the skill of their arms, learning, kindness and wisdom. This is the lesson the Indian Epics preached. The Pandavas were in the forest so long because their services were required to do all these things. They would not live on the charity of others. They were not the idle men who believe in destiny. They were the advocates of energy, labour and intellectual culture. Success in life depends on man's genius and culture more than anything else. The Pandavas did not practise Yoga in their forest life but were engaged in active work for the advancement of civilisation by transforming tyrants into co-operators in their work by the force of arms, skill and enterprise. The Pandavas were very closely identified with the great works of reclamation in ancient India.



THE SVAYAMVARA MARRIAGE OF DRAUPADI.

Chapter IX.

The Wonderful Marriage of Draupadi.

The handsome and accomplished princes of India liked to possess the most beautiful princess available, and for that reason a system of marriage called Swayambara was considered the best method. Free and full liberty was given to a princess to choose her own husband, or her father or brother assisted her choice by setting suitors a task which, if accomplished would convince him that the successful bridegroom was able to protect the bride in every way and that the alliance would be profitable to the family as well.

When the marriage bell of Draupadi rang out, a thousand princes of India assembled to win the prize. They were entertained in the royal fashion of the day. Every heart was burning with love and glory, beating as rapidly as the marriage bell. All went there merry, cheerful and full of hope. All were anxious to catch the first glimpse of the famous beauty. The winner of the great prize generally showered largesse on the Brahmanas and presented the remainder to the bards, minstrels and heralds. Consequently musicians, dancers, singers and actors from all countries went there to entertain the assembled princes and in order that they might receive rich presents. Skilful artists and artisans were there to exhibit their goods and sell them with great profit to these princes, who would offer them as presents to the bride and her friends. Everyone was elated at the prospect of making a large fortune at this kind of marriage festival, where all the great princes of India were present. The Pandavas were not living in the palatial guest house of the King of the Panchals but in a poor potter's house, begging their bread in the beautiful city in the disguise of Brahmans while the great kings and princes passed by, beautifully adorned in their most majestic splendour and lending additional grandeur to the great occasion.

All the celebrated kings brought with them their friends, armed forces and retinues, so that they might return to their kingdoms in a fit and proper manner when they had secured the prize. Everyone was sure of success and many wanted to carry

her off by force of arms. This naturally told heavily upon the purse of the father of the bride, but these expenses were not grudged because of the great aim the kings had in view. The capital of the Panchala king was in full swing; mirth and merriment everywhere abounded. There were performances by tuneful minstrels, plays by actors and dancers, grand exhibitions by fearless gladiators and wrestlers, all over the town. The grand assembly continued over a fortnight.

"The kings and princes entered the palace of Swayamvara through the north-east gate. The arena was built on a plain and on auspicious ground in the north-east of the city. The Samajbata (Arena) was surrounded by palaces, and it was enclosed on all sides by a wall and a moat; it was ornamented with gates and arches, and covered all over with a beautiful canopy. It resounded with the notes of thousands of trumpets, and was scented with Aguru (Black Aloe), ornamented with garlands and sprinkled with sandal water paste......When those best of kings, who were adorned with the fragrant paste of Aguru, who were greatly powerful, noble-minded, liberal, devoted to Brahmanas, beloved of the whole world for their good deeds, and the protectors of their kingdoms, took their respective seats the people of the city and the country, who had come to see Krishna and who had already taken their seats on the excellent platforms all around, saw them. The Pandavas sat there in the arena with the Brahmanas and saw the great affluence of the Panchala king. All the citizens—making a deep noise as that of the ocean—took their seats on the platforms with the desire of seeing the Swayamvara." The object of marrying Draupadi in the Swayamvara form is mentioned thus: "Drupada always cherished the wish of bestowing his daughter Krishna on Kiriti (Arjuna), the son of Pandu, but he never spoke of it to anybody. The Panchala king caused a very stiff bow to be made incapable of being bent by any man except Arjuna. Causing machinery to be erected into the sky, the king set up a mark to be shot at through that machinery. Draupadi, having bathed, attired in the best robes and adorned with all ornaments, entered the arena carrying in her hand a golden dish on which there was a garland of flowers and other offerings of the Arghya. Dhristadyumna said: 'Hear, O ye assembled kings; this is the bow, that is the mark, and these are the arrows. Shoot the mark through the orifice of the machine with these fine sharp arrows. Truly do I say, he who, possessing noble birth, beauty and strength, will achieve this

great feat, shall obtain to-day for his wife this my sister, Krishna.' " Vaishampayana related :—" Having thus addressed the assembled kings, Drupada's son (Dristadyumna) then spoke thus to his sister, reciting to her the names and lineage and the achievements of those assembled potentates," proving beyond a doubt that Draupadi was introduced to all the princes present there to seek her hand. The test was to try the winner's skill in archery. The institution of marriage in both the East and West has been considered from time immemorial the law of God. Manners make a man and woman respected. Marriage is not ordained to satisfy the urge of nature but to provide for the worthiest part of man, which is his mind and conscience, a partner who can respond with her mind and conscience as a remedy for loneliness. If to marriage is brought a mind perpetually averse and disagreeable, it betrays both man and woman to a worse state of things than the most crying needs of loneliness. Marriage is not a bond wherein the mind is engaged only to satisfy the senses and help the work of creation, like the ordinary beasts and birds. Such a marriage is not a marriage in the strict sense of the word or a true conception of it; it sets one sex beneath the formalities and respects of the other sex simply to satisfy the wants of each other. In such a union the minds of both are so disgraced and vilified that there can be no union, no just or tolerable contentment. It is not an institution of marriage ordained by the laws of Nature or by the sanction of a true society ruled by a worthy king. There, life is thrown into the midst of temptations and disorders, as the Mahabharata testified in the life of Dirghatama and Pradweshi (in Adi Parvan, Chapter CIV) which ended in separation and persecution. This gave birth to the stringent social law of the Hindus. " Whether the husband is dead or alive a wife cannot have any connection with another man; if she does so she will be considered fallen; calumny and evil report will always follow her." The wife with the help of her sons threw Dirghatama into the Ganges after binding him hand and foot and tying him to a raft. She said: " You were neither to me a bhayri, or supporter of the family, nor a protector. It was I who supported you and your children, as you were blind from your birth. Begone, I would not carry you to a Kshatriya king and become rich!" This gives one an idea of the stringent laws of the Hindus in ancient India, and it must be kept in mind how very difficult it was for a princess to choose her husband without any knowledge or acquaintance beforehand.

The truth was that the parents gave their daughter a proper education and a knowledge of the bridegrooms they thought worthy of her before the Swayamvara marriage, and the test was fixed so as to be performed by one only. It was for this reason the brother of the bride, and not the herald, was doing the work of the herald so as to help his sister with the necessary information she might require, and to see that she made no mistake. The different systems of the Hindu marriage show that the general honour due to parents was very great, but the daughters were quite free to choose their own husbands and their parents did not stand in their way. The Mahabharata furnishes ample proof. For instance, it can be shown in Yajati and Devajani's marriage, while sage Kanna sent Sakuntala to King Dushyanta, who married her in his absence. The idea of union in marriage, in the English vocabulary, lies in the words "they shall be one flesh," which must include the fitness of mind and disposition. Breeding symbolises the spirit of concord and union between them. The union of bodies is reflected in the unity of mind and action. Procreation may be considered essential to marriage, but it cannot be overlooked that in human actions the mind is the principal actor and behind it there is the soul; the body plays only a passive part, being at best an animal waste of energy. The Western religious view of marriage may be of interest in explaining the marriage of Draupadi. It is the most contentious point in the Mahabharata. "Marriage is a conjunction of one man and one woman, lawfully connected into one flesh for mutual help's sake, ordained of God." No true marriage can be consecrated without the true consent of the contracting parties.

There is another nice definition of marriage. "Marriage is a divine institution, joining man and woman in a love suited to the helps and comforts of domestic life." The divine institution seems to be a sufficient basis for marriage. Divine institution has such an influence upon the Form as, without it, the Form is not sufficient to distinguish matrimony from other conjunctions of male or female which are not to be counted as marriage. The civil lawyers and, before that, Justinian and Tribonia have defined matrimony as a "conjunction of man and woman having individual compatibility of life." The law of divorce is based on the conjunction of body and not of mind. The East differs materially from the West there. Nature herself, the universal mother, intends everything for her own perfection and preservation. The communion of divine and

human right in the creation is reflected in the conjunction of male and female in the society of all life.

One can easily comprehend the several ends of marriage. The ancient Indian marriage system aimed at the attainment of true love and true worship of God which makes marriage a divine institution; not a bondage or a snare, but a blessing. Unless there be a true love, born of compatibility marriage cannot last. To consecrate such a marriage, the divine receptacle of love, Sri Krishna, was present in person at the Panchal court—to officiate and not to win her hand. This is the first appearance of Sri Krishna in the Mahabharata, he who was called the root of the tree of virtue which Yudhisthira represented. Draupadi is love incarnate; any description other than this of her person would belie her. She did not come out of earth like Sita for the destruction of Ravana, but she was the fruit of a sacrifice of Narayana to found the empire of righteousness and love by removing hatred and envy. The marriage of Draupadi is not a mere union but the birth of a human society of love and peace, engendered by goodwill amongst the brothers of creation and with a God of love above all. For that reason Draupadi is called the friend of Sri Krishna and lover of the Pandavas.

All human society must proceed from the mind rather than from the meeting-place of interests in the flesh and the body. Marriage is not a mere formality or rite of union to enjoy bodily pleasure; this must be understood before listening to what happened in the Swayamvara marriage and how Draupadi was won and who was the fortunate man to carry her to the altar.

"Arjuna, walking round that bow in due form and bowing his head to the Lord Ishan, took up the bow which Rukma, Sunita, Vakra, Radha's son Karna, Durjodhana, Salya, and many other kings, accomplished in the science and practice of arms, could not even string with great exertion. and he stringed it within the twinkling of an eye, and there arose the great joy of the Brahmanas and a great clamour. The musicians struck up in concert hundreds of drums and trumpets. The bards and heralds began to chant the praise of the hero in sweet strains."

Seeing this, the kings all rushed upon Drupada in anger with bows and arrows, and the arena was suddenly converted into a battlefield. In the pandemonium the two sons of Pandu, Bhima and Arjuna, the great chastisers of foes, at once advanced to oppose those kings rushing towards Drupada like mad elephants.

The kings and princes assembled at the Swayamvara

threatened to kill Drupada and burn Draupadi on a funeral pyre rather than allow anyone who was not a Kshatriya to marry her, especially when Karna was disqualified on that ground. The marriage was postponed and the fight commenced in real earnest. The kings learnt a good lesson. Durjodhana and his friend Karna were astonished at the feats of Bhima and Arjuna. Sri Krishna told Balarama, his brother, that he had heard the Pandavas had escaped unhurt from the Lac House at Baranavata. These youths were none but Bhima and Arjuna, and Balarama was very pleased on being assured of this. Then Sri Krishna found that the bullies had slaked their thirst for fighting and wanted someone to intervene. He thrust himself between the struggling foes and addressed them thus: "Princes, forego this frantic jangle. What! Are the Panchals fallen so low that the beautiful princess's hand is doomed to be the spoil of this sort of dishonourable brawl?" The Pandavas were discovered in the great fight when everyone was defeated. Sri Krishna declared that Draupadi was rightfully won. At last the defeated kings and princes retired to their kingdoms surprised and abashed. The Brahmans waved their scarfs in joy. The marriage was deferred. The most beautiful Draupadi had witnessed the fight from a secure place and enjoyed immensely how the offending intruders were taken to task for their conduct. The commotion was over, the Brahmans were satisfied in every way, duly honoured with presents, food and drink. The farewell roar of acclamation rent the air. The Kurus left the place in great disgrace and returned in haste to their kingdom. The whole of the great assembly was agog with the sensational news of the great feat of the Pandavas and how the wicked and cruel plot of Durjodhana and his father had failed to destroy them.

The news spread like wild fire throughout the length and breadth of all the kingdoms of the kings and princes of India who attended the ceremony. This was the beginning of the wonderful marriage of Draupadi. Kunti, the intelligent mother of the Pandavas, was very concerned at the unusual delay in her sons' homecoming, and all sorts of cruel misgivings were oppressing her. She heard from the general public that there was a great fight in the marriage pandal and that the ceremony had been put off for the present. The verdict of the test was given in favour of an unknown Brahman hero. He and his brother defeated the whole assembly of kings, who had tried to kill him, the bride and her father.

Kunti was to a certain extent relieved that nothing untoward had happened beyond a fight, but she was anxious to know what had actually happened and if her sons were the victors in the fight or not. Time hung heavily upon her and every minute seemed an hour. Suspense is worse than suspicion. At last the sons arrived and they informed her of what had happened. They were delayed, as they had to avoid the crowd, exchange greetings with Sri Krishna, Balarama and Drupada and to change their clothes spoiled in the great affray, donning others provided by King Drupada. Drupada wanted them to bring their mother to the palace. It is needless to add that they were not allowed to remain in the potter's house any longer and they were transferred to the special guest house of the King of Panchala. The Queen of the Panchalas with her daughter visited Kunti. Sri Krishna, King Drupada and Yudhisthira exchanged frequent visits. A secret council was held to decide the important question that had arisen in the Panchala Court.

Vyasa took the leading part in it. His presence must have been shrouded in mystery. He recited the sacrifice of Yama in the Naimisha forest, where death took place. He spoke of the five forms of Indra Bishwavuks; Bhutadhamana, greatly effulgent Sivi, Sauti and Tejaswin, which were the Pandavas, and Sakshmi who was Draupadi. Drupada did not rely on such mythology or the cock-and-bull story of asking boons five times, and could not agree to the proposal of Vyasa of giving out that Draupadi was married to the five Pandavas while she would actually be united with due ceremonies with Yudhisthira only. In a Swayamvara the winner could give away the prize in any way he liked with the consent of the girl, and Arjuna's request to his elder brother has been quoted before, which is sufficient. Drupada only agreed when he was fully convinced by Vyasa that such a declaration would not materially affect the interests of his daughter in any way, but would actually advance her cause. It was said that Vyasa initiated Drupada into foresight of the things accruing from such a declaration and the true importance of the boon theory. The description of the marriage ceremony in the Mahabharata, as quoted below will convince any reasonable man that the actual marriage took place with Yudhisthira only, and that his wife could not be married again so long as he was alive, according to Hindu institutes of Manu, etc. "Then that Veda-knowing priest (Dhaumya) kindled the sacred fire and poured the libations of ghee in that

blazing fire with proper Mantras. That Mantra-knowing Brahmana then called Yudhisthira and united him with Krishna (Draupadi)."

"Walking round the fire (seven times), the bride and the bridegroom took each other's hand. Thus they were married by the Veda-knowing Dhaumya. Then taking leave of that ornament of battle (Yudhisthira), he (Dhaumya) went out of the palace. Then those mighty car-warriors, the perpetuators of the Kuru race, those princes, attired in costly robes, took the hand of that best of women (Draupadi) day by day in succession. The celestial Rishi told me of a very wonderful incident, namely, that the high-souled lady of slender waist (Draupadi) regained her virginity day after day (*i.e.*, every day after her previous marriage)." The great wealth Drupada gave away at the marriage to Draupadi was divided equally amongst the brothers, according to the wish of Kunti, Queen of Pandu. The celestial sage Narada was said to have circulated the report of the marriage of Draupadi with the five Pandavas.

This report of Draupadi's marriage was certainly wonderful. In the Kuru court the old king Dhritarastra understood that his son Durjodhana had won the great beauty, Draupadi, and ordered various ornaments to be made for her and that elaborate arrangements be made to receive them with due pomp and ceremony. He was then told by Vidura that he was mistaken. There seemed to be quite a comedy of errors associated with the marriage of Draupadi, caused everywhere by the false declaration, and especially in the court of the Kurus. The whole world then was astonished by it, and is even now. The Hindu institutes of those days did not sanction such a marriage, nor had they at any time, as was clearly mentioned by Drupada. Vyasa took him aside and said something to him in confidence. The other members of the secret council were the Pandavas, their mother and Dhristadyumna, and in their presence Vyasa took Drupada in hand, for he raised the very important question of good manners and usage, asking how could the elder brother think of accepting one who was the wife of his younger and *vice versa*. It was a foolish attempt to throw mud in the eyes of King Drupada by retailing the order of the ignorant mother. The marriage of a princess of Draupadi's position with five husbands was physically, morally and spiritually impossible, more especially with the Pandavas, who were all immaculate Epic characters who immolated all their enjoyments of life in the

cause of religion and truth. Such immodest aspersions were not compatible, like water and oil, with their great virtues.

The well-known tale of Nala and Damayanti may be cited as to how the princess held her chastity in the great trial by the five Gods; this tale might have been foisted upon Draupadi to show her chastity and love. After the marriage ceremony of Draupadi the blessing of Kunti bore testimony to the real truth about the marriage. There Draupadi was compared to Damayanti. In the midst of all sorts of interpolations there were then most important things mentioned. "Be installed with the virtue-loving king Yudhisthira, as his queen of the kingdom and the capital of Kurujangala. I rejoice to-day seeing you dressed in red silk. May you soon give me an occasion of expressing my joy again when you will give birth to an accomplished son and an heir to the throne of your great husband."

Sri Krishna made costly presents to the married couple in honour of their happy union and the most desirable welding of love and faith.

The marriage of Draupadi gave rise to many speculations and the most important were at the court of the Kurus. Karna was clearly told before the Swayamvara ceremony that he would not be allowed to try his skill if he wanted to marry Draupadi, but he could do so for any other prince or king of India if he liked. This wounded his sensibilities very much as it touched the question of his low birth, and thenceforth he became a lifelong enemy of the Princess Draupadi. One may well imagine how his anger increased when he learnt that Draupadi had been united by nuptial ties with the Pandavas. He advised his friend Durjodhana to avenge the wrong of the defeat at the Swayamvara ceremony of Draupadi by immediately declaring war against Drupada and the Pandavas before they could grow in power and wealth. It was said that Karna was instrumental in the plot of the Lac House at Baranavata (Karna Parvan, Chapter LXXIV). He said that it would be quite impossible for anyone to create disunion amongst the Pandavas when an intelligent and accomplished princess like Draupadi was united with them as their common wife. The well-known story of Sanda and Upasanda, however, was cited against it. The great friendship of those brothers was destroyed by their desire for the possession of a beautiful girl, which brought about the death of both in a quarrel.

This story of yore had the desired effect, along with the good counsels of Vidura, Drona and others in the Kuru court. Karna,

Durjodhana and Sakuni became hall-marked as enemies of the Pandavas in the Kuru court. The whole world cried shame on old King Dhritarastra and his cruel intrigues to destroy the Pandavas in the Lac House, and any new attempt or open declaration of war against them might have given rise to an open rebellion in the kingdom, and for this reason Karna's advice was thrown out.

The subjects were anxious to see the Pandavas and Draupadi, and Vidura was sent to the court of the Panchalas, where the Pandavas lived with Sri Krishna for nearly a year after the marriage, holding consultations as to the recovery of the kingdom. The decision regarding Vidura's mission to bring back the Pandavas, with Kunti and Draupadi, rested entirely with Sri Krishna, as will appear from the text of the Mahabharata. "Drupada said: 'O Vidura, O greatly learned man, it is as you say. O lord, I too have been made exceedingly happy by this alliance. It is highly proper for these illustrious princes to return to their ancestral kingdom. But it is not proper for me to say so myself. If the hero Yudhisthira, the son of Kunti, if Bhima and Arjuna, if these best of men the twins (Nakula and Sahadeva) and if Rama and Krishna, both learned in the precepts of religion, wish it, then let the Pandavas go there. These two best of men (Rama and Krishna) are ever engaged in doing what is agreeable and beneficial to them (the Pandavas).' Yudhisthira said: 'O King, I, with all my brothers, am now dependent on you. We shall all gladly do what you will command us to do.'" Vaishampayana said: "Thereupon Vashudeva said: 'I am of opinion that they should go. But we must all abide by the opinion of the King Drupada, who is learned in all precepts of virtue.' Drupada said: 'Having considered all the circumstances, I certainly agree with the foremost of men, the heroic and mighty-armed Dasaraha (Krishna), there is no doubt the illustrious sons of Kunti, the Pandavas, are now to me as they are to Vashudeva. The son of Kunti, Yudhisthira, himself does not seek the welfare of the Pandavas so much as this foremost of men Keshava (Krishna) does.'" After one has escaped a great danger his spirit rises and he is caught in a state of great and pleasing excitement. Such was the case with the Pandavas after their escape from the Lac House. They then enjoying the blessings of wealth, friendship and love in the palace of King Drupada. Sri Krishna did not like them to be there and advised them to go to their father's kingdom. In the

case of Draupadi it was a question of cruel separation from her home and parents. A curiosity, a nervous activity seized her as she contemplated a new life in a new home. She took her courage in both hands and her golden joys were in the motto: "Nothing venture, nothing gain."

She believed in activity of life and the profession of love; honour and faith were her first principles of action. Truth is always the attribute of a hero in olden days and Draupadi had by her side a husband who was an incarnation of truth and honour. Nature in all her operations impresses man and woman with the idea of invisible power, and makes him or her anxious for the approval of that power and what it can bestow as a reward. Thus the first root of religion springs up. The savage people are courageous who covet praise for courage, who decorate themselves with the skins of beasts they kill and save the weaker people from depredations. The skins and scalps of their foes are the trophies of honour. They emerged out of brute life by attaching a price to the praise which civilised men never give except for works which secure or advance the welfare of humanity. The savages discovered that they could not live in safety unless they spoke the truth amongst themselves. Thus truth became valued and from it grew the principle of honour; out of it sprang the arms of law and justice. It is, therefore, the latent virtue of primitive man and woman; it is a sort of desire quite unextinguishable and is often carried beyond death.

Woman, who brings up and supports children with the milk of her breasts, is the mother of creation. There is a hidden secret power of creation in man and woman. Power is honoured, and honour is the foundation of all improvements in mankind. Man covets the honour attached to the power which protects him, gives him soil for cultivation, and helps him in trade and commerce to sell his products to the best advantage, bringing to justice any one who interferes. Courage, Truth, Justice, Enterprise and Faith are the five essential attributes of a king, and they were personified in the five Pandavas who stood by the goddesses of prosperity, the Dowager mother Kunti and Queen Draupadi.

This was the family picture of the Pandavas which the marriage of Draupadi completed on which all kinds of improvements in mankind solely depended. In that sense the emblem of prosperity is the wife of all the five essential virtues of a virtuous king of India.

The Swayamvara ceremony of marriage demonstrated one

important feature of Hindu society, namely, that princesses of India stand on the highest pinacle both intellectually and spiritually, if not physically, and become worthy helpmates of Kings and Emperors of India. In marriage alliances it was then found essential that the two characters should supplement each other. The marriageable ages of man and woman were then fixed by Statue. Everyone wanted happiness, and the great Epic demonstrates the stages of love in the births of Drona and Bhima, and Bharata. Cupid does not reveal himself in person from the very beginning, but his influence is felt step by step, first in beautiful shape, enjoyment, soul, science and spiritual essence. Love varies with the kind, sphere, and degree of beauty. Strictness of manners and a healthy mode of living diminish diseases and solve the great question of race propagation for which the ceremony of marriage was established in all societies of the world. Those who were incapable of mental activity and moral freedom, had to obey the will of another in rendering bodily service. To that low level of serfdom the primitive marriage might have been consigned had it not been for the example of the Epic period.

What is more, the great question of religious connections was then established in the marriage system. The true implication of Hindu marriage needs more than a passing remark or observation. Marriage is an evolution from the theory of creation. The maintenance of Hindu religion and civilisation materially depends on the birth, marriage and education of man and woman. Birth is the first entrance to the material world of existence and is the fruit of a happy union of male and female. Ancient Hindu marriage did not take place until and unless both realised their mutual responsibilities of life. The youth received practical teaching in the house of his preceptor under strict discipline, quite apart from the parents. The parents then had no influence on the education of their children, the preceptors deciding the professions in life of their disciples according to their merit and capacity. The State maintained these preceptors and their disciples from the public treasury. The chief aim of ordinary marriage had as its first objective that of providing the State with children. The question of free intercourse between male and female was not prohibited except after the time when women could conceive. This was the case until the Vedic sage Svetaketu prohibited it strictly.

Marriage did in fact put restrictions on free intercourse between female and male and, for that reason Yajati's daughter,

Madhabi, refused to marry when her father requested her. Women were respected, taught and protected by the social institutions of marriage and stern domestic duties. They were enlightened and cultured, and even took part in actual warfare and the active side of the husband's life. For such services Kaikeyi got the boon from her husband Dasaratha which enabled her to exile Rama Chandra. The marriage enunciated the principles of self-control and the birth of a child demonstrated the true reflection of self in the union of the soul of the male and female creatures. How terrible it would have been if there were no mother and wife to take care of children and no unselfish love to protect them, even to the sacrifice of their own lives! What noble fruits are the simple children that women bring forth by the blessings of God. They begin their lives under their mother's hands, and the creation of the world was said to have originated with Dame Nature by the Will of God. Children are not the fruits of passion. The great king Dasaratha had hundreds of wives, yet for children he had to perform sacrifices before Rama Chandra and his brothers were born. The same was the case with Draupadi and her brothers. It was really surprising that interpolations of the worst nature could find place in the Mahabharata, crying down the religious marriage system of the Hindus with all sorts of false stories of births of children before marriage. Vyasa, the great author of the Hindu institutes and of the Mahabharata, was said to be the illegitimate son of Satyabati, daughter of King Uparichara Basuhoma, with whose sacrifice in honour of Narayana, displacing that of Indra, began the Bharata Samhita.

Nor was this all. Vyasa was described as the real father of Dhritarastra, Pandu and Vidura under the Niyoga system, which is not permissible under the institutes of Manu in the twice-born castes. The mother of the Pandavas was similarly charged with the birth of Karna before her marriage. The births of the Pandavas were produced by the connection of Gods with Kunti. All these charges might have been made in the days of Buddhist supremacy in India, and poor Draupadi was not even spared; or they might be creations of the Kuru Court. The first marriage took place between the God Siva and Goddess Uma (Durga) but proved unsuccessful when the religious aspect of the question was raised. This took place in the well-known Daksha Yajna where the great question of Siva and Narayana worship was raised, and Uma, the beautiful wife of Siva, gave up her life as her

father was determined to worship Narayana and did not invite her husband. The son-in-law has been, since then, worshipped in the marriage ceremony as Vishnu by the father-in-law. The great Sri Krishna is worshipped as the God of Gods and as a symbol of divine love. He was not only present in person at the marriage of Draupadi but was to a very great extent instrumental in forming this happy union. Man and woman in ancient India enjoyed free will with regard to love matters and the worship of God, which was proved beyond a shadow of doubt in the marriage system of Swayamvara. What was the most important thing in this marriage was the mock obedience to the final decree of Sri Krishna that Draupadi was lawfully won and which had put a stop to the foolish tongues and hands of the kings and princes of India. Then Sri Krishna gave the Pandavas freedom to choose.

Though a God, he left Draupadi free to choose; he was not the match-maker. Drupada wanted Arjuna to become his son-in-law, but Arjuna refused to marry her, considering her to be worthy of his great brother. Arjuna was rewarded for his self-control with Subhadra, the sister of Sri Krishna, later on. Sri Krishna was not in the secret council of Drupada's court where the full details of Draupadi's marriage were discussed and settled. The reasoning does not depend on God but upon human will and conscience. The great question of predestination cannot altogether be a question of the grace of God, but must depend upon the belief of mankind. All these questions were raised in the marriage of Draupadi. Who was responsible for all these? It was a marriage of the Golden Age when Nature contributed beauty of form and gracefulness, and virtue gave the air of modesty to a woman to adorn the wisdom, chivalry and majesty of a great prince. The earthly parents gave them wealth and ornaments to make them more beautiful. Draupadi never knew the vanity of dancing in joy, like a peacock spreading out its tail. She never lifted the curtain of her veil from her beautiful face. Only her delicate dark shining rings of hair lying so charmingly about her ears and neck could be seen. A smile would be visible in the dark liquid depths of those wonderful eyes, and from the eyelids, delicate as petals, swept those long lashes. Ah! what a prize was won by the most fortunate, was the sigh of the disappointed suitors. If anything ever goes wrong, the fault will lie with the bridegroom, for he can make her what he likes; this is the finding of the Hindu institute of marriage law in ancient India.

Chapter X.

Cause and Effect.

The Kuru princes, Durjodhana and his brothers, with their great friend Karna, returned to the Kuru court defeated and disgraced. The good subjects were greatly pleased with the news of the miraculous escape of the Pandavas from the Lac House and their good fortune in winning the beautiful and accomplished princess Draupadi. They were all anxious to see them, and cried shame openly upon the old king and his wicked children. The whole capital was excited and on the verge of a revolution. The Kuru court rightly apprehended that, without the return of the Pandavas into Hastinapur, the people would rise. So Vidura was sent to Panchala. A blow sometimes does a man good. The Kuru princes hid their infamous faces in their respective castles and did not appear in the Kuru court when Vidura was sent. The people held meetings in the capital, reading lessons to the Kuru court on their duties and telling them who was fit to occupy the throne of the kingdom. The spies reported everything to the court of the Kurus as well as to that of the Panchalas. The Pandavas heard all this from the spies and they were very pleased. Yudhisthira reported it to Draupadi and to his mother.

In the Golden Age it is said that there were no states. Mankind, living under the protection of the Gods, only accumulated flocks and herds. The state arose from the small strength of individuals, which was not sufficient to supply the material wants of a country or a nation. The advantage of the collective strength of men was then in evidence. The true aim of the Government was to establish the virtue of the citizens—men and women—to contribute to the happiness of society, if not to that of the whole nation, by presenting before them true and beneficent ideals in Princes and Kings, Princesses and Queens, Ministers and administrators, priests and law-givers. The happiness of a nation depends more on example than on precepts or laws. The virtue of ancient India did not represent something founded on habit, custom and public opinion, but the religious and spiritual aspect, which

might be said to be the true perception of the rational part of the soul. Perception is attributed to the appetitive part of the soul, with reason and conscience as its guide and demonstrator. It is not the perception of the senses which brings in its train pleasure and pain. The State must be wise. Distinctions of class and the constitution of the State were based on wide grounds of politics, morality and science, and the wise and just alone were entitled to govern the country and nation. The State then represented an enlarged picture of man in a king who could devote his time to philosophic meditation for the spiritual uplift of his subjects, administer law and justice, and protect the country by encouraging the military spirit and chivalry of the age. A special class of warriors were required for external protection, and energetic men with special knowledge of science could attend to the internal development in reclaiming waste land and advancing the moral and spiritual faculties of the people.

Luxury necessitates a class of warriors and rulers, a body of agriculturists and traders, businessmen and merchants, and labourers, and with them the whole State organism. Simplicity, temperance and hardiness were ensured, not only by education and culture, but by strict rules of life and laws against luxury. Beggars were not then tolerated. Virtue was the highest element of goodness in individuals and the State depended on it. Disturbing elements were not allowed to intrude into the State and society. The learned sages, philosophers and great men of the day jealously guarded the purity of society so that it might not be shaken at its foundation. Travels into other countries were only allowed to men of mature age, merchants advancing the wealth of the country, and for educational and religious purposes.

Virtue was not a mere matter of chance. The sole means of producing it, and continuing it, depended on the time functions of the State, which had to be carried out in such a manner that the people would learn everything from the ideal hands of the State. The question of justice and fair play was an essential virtue of the State—the State can alone secure the victory of righteousness over evil. The State represented the great ideal of a happy environment with work to do. This was the ideal state of ancient Hindu politics with which the Kuru kings had been identified, and people loved them, and the Mahabharata recorded their glories. Dhritarastra was not such a king. He was blind physically, mentally and

spiritually, and his sons were wicked tyrants. They were the background for the great characters that the Pandavas, and their great friend Sri Krishna, represented. The Pandavas resuscitated the great ideals of the State by their actions. That was why Sri Krishna advised the Pandavas to go to Hastinapur with Vidura. Vidura was the great minister of the Kuru Court. As long as he was in power everything went well, but when he was not heard and his advice was disregarded its downfall took place. Yudhisthira was not afraid to go to the Kuru Court. Wisdom availed Daniel when he was cast into the den of lions. Little did he know to what lengths ambition and revenge can lead the wicked, instead of the repentance which should be there.

The Pandavas represent an ideal family group, knit by the marriage of Draupadi. The brotherly affection of the Pandavas was cemented by their grievous circumstances and by their great mother Kunti, who distributed the wealth Yudhisthira received as the dowry of his marriage with Draupadi. This in a way convinced the world of the truth of the report that Draupadi was married to all the Pandavas and not to Yudhisthira alone. The Pandavas were grateful to King Drupada and Draupadi, for consenting to what their mother wished. In the court of Drupada, before the assembled kings and princes, the might of the Pandavas was displayed and the cruel intrigue of the Lac House was exposed with the disclosure of their real identities, established by their valour and the glory of winning the prize of the day. The sons of Dhritarastra beat a precipitate retreat to their home, denounced as so many worthless creatures. The Pandavas met their real friend and relation in Sri Krishna at the marriage ceremony of Draupadi. The great poet who circulated the story of Draupadi's marriage with the five Pandavas meant nothing else than that the love and care with which the illustrious Princess Draupadi administered the household duties of the Pandavas, learning from her great mother-in-law Kunti, were such as to make the brothers into one being and not separate. They were knit as one corporate body, on account of their sufferings through the cruel persecutions of the Kuru princes and their wicked uncle Dhritarastra and his ministers Kanika, Purochana and others.

The Pandavas bade adieu to King Drupada, Sri Krishna, and everyone they had come to know, in a fitting manner before they set out for Hastinapur in company with Vidura, the

messenger of King Dhritarastra. Their mother Kunti went with them, also Draupadí, who must have been grieved at the parting from her parents and brothers as well as other household adherents and companions. It was only natural that the Pandavas should recall their previous entrance to the Kuru Court to carry out the funeral obsequies of their father there, when they had come out of that place to go to the fateful Lac House to witness the Siva festival, and now entering it again after the marriage of Draupadi with rich presents from the kingdom of Kanouj. When a prince was exiled he was clothed in complete black, but when returning from a marriage celebration the dress he put on was red and crimson. The marriage was decided by the strength of arms and skill of archery, and therefore it was a curious thing that triumphal arches were raised in the Kuru Court to receive the Pandavas as victors of the great tourney, where the Kuru Princes with their friends were miserably defeated. It was for this reason that the Kuru Princes could not come out to receive them, but their preceptors Drona and Kripa and the distinguished bowman Vhitrasen represented them at the request of the old king.

All the citizens and their families came out to pay their sincere homage to the Pandavas and to catch a glimpse of the most beautiful bride Draupadi. The capital of the Kurus was packed with sight-seers, the roads were lined by them. Various exclamations from the very heart of the people resounded through the city and its precincts. Never before had the city presented such a dignified yet pleasant scene of hearty welcome. The Kuru Princes were startled at the firing of the guns and at the bonfires, and the thundering roars of hearty cheers which greeted the Pandavas. The citizens were convinced that they were alive, that the cruel plot of the wicked king and his sons had not harmed a hair of their heads and that they were more beautiful than ever. They were all pleased with the lovely bride Draupadi, whose great beauty was enhanced by her gracefulness, charm, and last, though not least, her modesty. The children were jumping and skipping around their guardians. It was a grand spectacle, beggaring all description. The citizens, old and young, had recovered their lost idols after a long time and the grand reception they gave them was annoying to the old king and his sons. The due formalities of royalties were exchanged, and the Pandavas were established once more in their father's palace. The public were entertained with nothing so much as with homilies

on resignation, the trials of moral justice, the great conquests of love and the power of public opinion.

These made the life of the Kuru prince Durjodhana unbearable, and he complained bitterly to his father about it. At last the weak king was roused to activity. All means of discrediting the Pandavas were tried in vain. The subjects loved them. To them the names of the Pandavas were those of deities. The return of the Pandavas to the Kuru capital seemed to the old king and his family a death-blow to their hopes of securing the throne for Durjodhana. The cruel plots and intrigues of the past stood in their way as a standing disgrace, yet this did not put an end to the old king's resourcefulness. He knew how to do things, and after consideration called upon the Pandavas to build a house and dominion afresh, to drive the plough and reclaim the forest of Khandavaprastha, lying in a waste quite unfit for human habitation. There was hardly room enough for them with his sons, who were all wicked and would wrong them against his own wish. He wanted to warn them as well as to persuade them to follow his good advice. There was hardly any prospect of them pulling well with his sons from what he had seen. He was not at all ashamed to make this proposal to the good Pandavas. He was thinking of the degeneration of the race and did not hesitate to cite it by reference to the conduct of his own sons. Mutual friendship with them was quite impossible and, if it was at all practicable, it would be by living at a distance and not in the same place.

The old king was seized with a paroxysm of affected grief when he recited the sufferings of the Pandavas in the Lac House, the forest and the shameful fight before the assembled kings and princes of India. He did not forget to cite the history of his own life, which he had carefully analysed from the time of his birth. How he was blind and deprived of his legitimate claim to the throne, and when he sat upon the throne at the request of his good brother, he lost him. He could not think with gratitude of this, as his sons were not good and obedient like the Pandavas, whom he loved more than his own sons. He was very anxious for their prosperity and happiness.

Philosophy triumphs quite easily over past and future evils, but present evils triumph over philosophy. The Kuru court was greatly touched by the affectation of the wicked king. The Pandavas realised that love was strong as death, and jealousy was cruel as the grave. They should beat their

swords into plough-shares and their spears into pruning hooks so that there would be no war with his sons. The Pandavas soon realised the true cause of the old king's paroxysm; that his head was sick and his heart faint at the failure of past plots and intrigues, and that a new one was hatched with great care to destroy them in the reclaiming of the fearful forest. He was perverted by his impatience for enjoyment, by the false prosperity of his régime and his desire to secure the throne for his own son Durjodhana. The Pandavas had no option but to comply with the old king's wishes. God helps those who help themselves.

Plough deep while sluggards sleep. It was said that an unjust peace was to be preferred to a just war. Everyone wore a fearful grin at the old king's decree. But such was not the case with the Pandavas, for one was never like an angel till his passions had died, and they always welcomed honest labour with a happy face. The Pandavas were very happy at the idea of building their own kingdom for themselves. It was this which distinguished them from the Kurus. This made the Pandavas quite different from the Kurus, for which every credit must be given to the old king Dhritarastra. Had there been no Asuras there could never have been any glory and greatness for the Devas and their King Indra. The relationship of the Kurus and the Pandavas must be realised in this light. This is the cause and effect of humaneness and cruelty, peace and war, friendship and enmity, good and bad, high and low in this world. It is not birth, lineage nor heritage which counts towards the real greatness of a man or woman, but character, training and actions—the true index of anyone being raised to the higher level of godhead. It is the company of men and women and the reading of their lives that make one realise the position of Heaven and Hell and their mutual relationship.

Adam Smith said in his Wealth of Nations (Vol. II. Book IV, Chapter VII, Part 3):—" To found a great empire for the sole purpose of raising up a people of customers may at first sight appear a project fit only for a nation of shopkeepers." The Pandavas sang and convinced their adherents of the truth of these lines:—

" My mind to me a kingdom is,
Such perfect joy therein I find
As far exceeds all earthly bliss
That God and Nature hath assigned."

This was the farewell song of the Pandavas when they left the city of Hastinapur after the unjust partition. One man shouted out very loudly, "Poor old King Dhritarastra! The Spring will bring no new shoots on thy withered tree."

The young Kuru princes thought that the Pandavas would be destroyed in their attempts to reclaim the unhealthy forest, full of fearful beasts, serpents and Asuras. In the savage world there is a perpetual struggle for life, and none but the strongest, most cunning and healthy have a chance of living, and then only by the use of their own strength and skill. But in the civilised state the weak think themselves strong without being so physically protected as they are by law and religion if not by the rules of humanity. The Kuru princes drew their own conclusions, according to their light and learning. They found facts to prove their theory and reasoned themselves into convictions. They were free to act, for the Pandavas were again, in a way, exiled from the capital of the Kurus, which was a great triumph. They thought well of the old king's new policy. For had they not failed to defeat Arjuna, Bhima, Nakul and Sahadeva in open battle at the Swayamvara assemblage? Yudhisthira could never be dispossessed of his kingdom, endowed as he was with all the virtuous qualities of a king and the love of the people. The stain of calumny could thus be removed from the minds of the subjects. Besides, the Pandavas were stronger than before with great allies at their backs like the Panchalas and Dasarhas.

Durjodhana did not remain in the capital. He went to the Swayamvara ceremony of the daughter of Chittrangada, king of Kalinga, at his capital Rajura. "Durjodhana went there accompanied by Karna. Hundreds of kings went there to secure the hand of the maiden. The festivities commenced and the maiden entered the arena, accompanied by her nurse and a guard of eunuchs. The names of the kings being mentioned to her, that fair maiden passed by the son of Dhritarastra as she had passed others before him. Durjodhana, however, could not bear this insult. Disregarding all the kings, he ordered the maiden to stop. Elated with the pride of power Durjodhana, taking up that maiden in his car, carried her away forcibly. Karna, riding on his car, followed Durjodhana. A great tumult then took place among the kings, all of whom were bent upon fighting. They pursued Karna and Durjodhana, but were defeated. The old king was very much pleased when he heard of this on their arrival at Hastinapur

and ordered great festivities there to celebrate the happy marriage of his beloved son Durjodhana. The people were not pleased with the marriage celebration. They scented ill-feeling and jealousy in the king's scheme.

The great author Vyasa demonstrates in Yudhisthira that the just man should do only good even to his enemies, for he greatly transcended the limits of ordinary morality. The virtue of the soul lies in conscience, wisdom, courage, valour and self-control. He seems to have standardised these singular views of truth and falsehood and ideal chastity. All this must be clearly understood before the characters can be appreciated together with their relation to the great plot of the Indian Epic.

Chapter XI.

Domestic Happiness.

The prosperity of a kingdom lies in agriculture. The cultivation of the soil is the occupation of the Indian people, the land tax forms the mainstay of the Imperial revenue in India and the class of cultivators constitutes the largest unit of the ancient social system of the Hindus. Agriculture has formed the staple occupation of the country ever since the days of Aryan civilisation. The hero of the Ramayana, Rama Chandra, married Sita, the daughter of Janaka, the king of Mithila, who was alleged to have come out of the womb of Mother Earth and disappeared therein. Sita is represented as an emblem of the deity of happiness. This cannot but be an allegory of agricultural development in India on which the domestic happiness of the entire population of the kingdom largely depended. Sri Krishna's brother, Balarama, who was the incarnation of the age in which the Pandavas flourished, carried the plough on his shoulder as the great instrument of success in life. The domestic happiness and prosperity of a householder more or less depend upon earthly possessions and a faithful wife. The great Epic furnishes such an example in Savitri and Draupadi, who regained the lost kingdoms of their husbands and their domestic peace and happiness. Draupadi, the great heroine of the Mahabharata, was represented to have come out of the sacrificial fire. The marriage ceremony of the Hindus takes place before the fire.

Hanuman, an emissary of Rama who found out Sita in the island of Ceylon, had made good use of fire in burning the palace so that the war could not be prolonged due to the impoverished state of the kingdom of Ravana. Fire and Varuna (ocean deity) were worshipped in the Ramayana and in the Mahabharata by the Pandavas in the reclamation of Khandavaprastha. They found out the best weapon of civilisation is the proper use of fire and other elements of nature. Valmiki, the first poet of India, figuratively showed the value of agriculture in the birth of the great heroine Sita; and the illustrious Vyasa likewise ascribed the origin of the heroine Draupadi to fire, and fire was worshipped

with the goddess of water, Varuna, in the founding of an empire and its capital Indraprastha. The other Pandavas, brothers of Yudhisthira, were married to other princesses of India as occasion and opportunities occurred; Draupadi was the Queen of the King Yudhisthira and she was not the common wife of the five Pandavas. The dowry of Subhadra's marriage with Arjuna was utilised in the founding of Indraprastha. Sri Krishna and Balarama were introduced in the Mahabharata in the marriage of Draupadi, and although they were born of Kshatriya parents, yet they were adopted by Vaisya parents. The fusion of the three castes, the Brahmana, Kshatriya and the Vaisya, was evident from the intermarriages between these castes, and the caste system was then not hereditary. King Yajati married Devajani, the daughter of Sukracharya, and Yadu was their son; the partition of his father's estate was decided upon for the sake of domestic happiness and the prosperity of the kingdom.

The partition amongst the descendants of the Lunar race had been the cause of a perpetual struggle between the two lines of descendants, the Kurus and the Panchalas, ever since the days of Kings Sambarana; it is mentioned even in the Vedas. The intermarriage between the Lunar and Solar dynasties was effected by the sage Vasistha when King Sambarana took refuge in the forest of the Punjab. The King Sambarana regained his lost kingdom from the Panchalas through his marriage with Tapati, a daughter of the King of the Solar dynasty. Dhritarastra, the old king of Hastinapur, made an unjust partition of the kingdom between his sons and the Pandavas after the marriage of Draupadi. In the prologue to the Mahabharata the story of Bibhavasu and Supratika raised the important question of the partitioning of paternal properties amongst brothers; they were converted into a tortoise and elephant in their next lives owing to their mutual curses. The fight continued even in the next life and when they were in the grip of death in their struggle, they were saved by God, when He was called upon. The Pandavas realised that the domestic happiness of mankind depended on mutual relationship and due performance of their respective duties. Obedience to King Dhritarastra who was appointed Regent by his departed brother Pandu, was considered to be the first and foremost duty by Yudhisthira and his brothers, so they had no other alternative but to submit to the old man.

There is no security in evil society, where the good are often persecuted. Even the administration of justice becomes a

mockery and partition a matter of persecution. Sin is a disgrace and reproach to one's understanding and reason; it is a sort of disease of the inward soul, due to the deformity of mind, vision and conscience; thus was Dhritarastra actually blind to all but earthly ambitions and the selfish domestic happiness of his children. The domestic happiness of a family in a kingdom depends on the virtue of its members. True happiness cannot be derived from external possessions, but from *bona fide* actions of wisdom and virtue. The virtues of a King, Queen, Prince and Princess had been held up as examples to Aryan Hindu Society to improve the material, moral and spiritual prosperity of the country and the nation at large. What are the opportunities which one can find to render active service to the country and the nation? What are the opportunities one can avail himself of in the due observance of his duties? Parents and guardians can maintain their just relationship and teach the world the sentiment of devotion and love by their conduct! The religion of India depended on the cardinal virtue of mankind and on the laws and precepts in the recognised institutes like Manu, etc. It is the duty of the children to obey their parents and guardians and they in return shall do such things as will bring joy to their parents and it is of this that the Hindu books of religion say that the entrance to Heaven depends more on the actions of dutiful sons and daughters than on those of the individual himself. It is stated in the Mahabharata that Yajati was saved from his fall from Heaven by his children.

The code of Manu says that only once can the partition of an estate be made, only once can a girl be given away in marriage, and only once can a gift be made.* In the same Chapter IX the question of partition is discussed in verses 104-106, which run as follows:—

> "Let the brothers congregate and equally partition the paternal estate after the demise of their father or mother, for they cannot do so during his or her lifetime as they are not the owners thereof. If the brothers wish to live undivided, let the eldest one take possession of the whole of the paternal estate and the other brothers shall depend upon him for their maintenance, as they did on their father. The eldest son is entitled to receive the entire portion of the paternal estate and is called Dharmaputra."

* The Mbh., Chapter IX.

This had been the case with the Pandavas and their love may be described in the lines of the poet:

"Affliction's sons are brothers in distress
A brother to relieve, how exquisite the bliss!"

Kunti, the mother of the Pandavas, and Gandhari, the wife of Dhritarastra, represented exemplary female characters of domestic happiness in the Mahabharata. Draupadi was the Goddess of prosperity to the Pandavas; this was the version of Kunti (Udyoga Parvan) and it is upheld in the current epithet uttered daily by orthodox Hindus so that no falsehood can endure the touch of the celestial names of Ahalaya, Draupadi, Tara, Kunti and Mandadari as they divest the minds of men of their sins of calumny and jealousy in the world. The unjust partition made by King Dhritarastra at the instance of his beloved son Durjodhana was but an attempt to wreak vengeance on the Pandavas and to win Draupadi after the destruction of the Pandavas in their attempt to reclaim the fearful forest of Khandavaprastha. The Pandavas thought of Sri Krishna, and they went to him after leaving Draupadi in her father's place with everything Yudhisthira then possessed. It is a custom even now current among the Hindus that, immediately after the marriage, the bride, after passing some time in her father-in-law's place, returns to her father's place and remains there for some time. The Pandavas were called upon to reclaim the forest of Khandavaprastha bordering upon the Punjab near a place where their forefather King Sambarana took refuge. The seats of the Government of the Solar and Lunar dynasties of kings had been in the North-West Provinces—Prayag, Hastinapur and Ajodhya—and not in the Punjab; and the Aryans did not come from there.

The peace and happiness of the domestic world are reflected in the unselfish love and great sacrifices which are made for others and not in the gratification of selfish passions and of the objects of selfish desire. The Mahabharata mentions the version of Manu Samhita, Chapter II, Verses 94-95 in the mouth of the patriarch King Yajati, that passion can never be extinguished by the enjoyment of the objects of desire, for the fire fed with libation of clarified butter only burns with double force. The man with self-restraint is then naturally superior to one who seeks the enjoyment of all his desires. Bacon, said:—

"He that hath wife and children, hath given
hostages to fortune; for they are impediments
to great enterprises either of virtue or mischief."

This has been the aim and object lesson of Hindu domestic life in ancient India with which the heroes and heroines of the Mahabharata were identified. The names of Gods and of celebrated men and women are consecrated in ancient shrines and domestic religious ceremonies are observed and practised even now with great fervour by the orthodox Hindus. The great motto of domestic happiness preached by Yudhisthira seemed to have been "Forget and forgive," *i.e.*, sacrifice your hatred, forgive the grievances of wrong and give up the idea of wreaking vengeance, for the success of life wholly depends on faith in God above and on your own exertions and energy. The kingdom of the Kurus, with Hastinapur as its capital, belonged to the late King Pandu and Dhritarastra was appointed Regent of the kingdom; he was not justified in not making over the paternal estate to the eldest son of Pandu and was wholly wrong in making the unjust partition, as he did when he gave Khandavaprastha to the Pandavas and asked them to leave the capital for the domestic happiness and peace of the royal family and kingdom. It was against the law of the land then prevalent, but the good Pandavas left the capital singing:—

"I love the forest: I could dwell among
That silent people, till my thoughts up grew
In nobly ordered form, as to my view
Rose the succession of that lofty thing."

Desire for glory, honour, fame and knowledge are natural in well-constituted minds and the intellect of progressive nations. The scenes of nature have some inexplicable charm even upon the most savage people. The face of Heaven is reflected in the animation of trees, their fruits and flowers, the passing and changing clouds of different colours overhead, flowing rivers and shining lakes and other natural scenes below; all these bless one with the idea of a Divine Father who created them for the happiness of His beloved children. All these objects of the material world present one important fact—that there are moral and spiritual purposes in the creation of the material world; some latent ties there are, which reach one's heart and make men partners with one another to protect mutual interests. The Pandavas, the Yadavas and the Panchalas, etc., were bound by such ties, and relationship grew up to advance the cause of domestic happiness in ancient India. A strong reliance on Heaven is only natural in great and generous characters who are strangers to meanness of mind and to ambitious speculations of fancy and imagination. Great ambition is a temptation which

disturbs the weak and unworthy, and revenge is not the feast of the good. The women of India were not then called upon to cover their faces with veils as the only means of escaping the tyrants' hands. They were capable of defending their honour and person. There is this difference in the characters of the heroines of the Ramayana and the Mahabharata that Sita was exiled for a false report that brings to memory the saying that "Caesar's wife should be above suspicion," in spite of her undergoing the fire ordeal, but that Draupadi and her good husband King Yudhisthira did not share any such suspicion. The great Sanskrit poet Bhavabhuti in the opening couplet of Uttararama-charita has in a like piece of good writing stated that a chaste woman cannot escape unjust criticism and calumny, and Shakespeare bore him out:—

> "Be thou as chaste as ice, as pure as snow
> Thou shalt not escape calumny."
>
> (*Hamlet*, Act III, Sc. I).

It was not shown in the Ramayana that jealousy was the hell of the injured suitor or lover, which the Mahabharata was found to have demonstrated in Durjodhana. In the Song of Solomon was heard "Love is strong as death, jealousy cruel as the grave." (VIII, 6).

The reclamation of Khandavaprastha by Sri Krishna and the Pandavas in the Mahabharata referred to an interesting phase of prosperity in India by agriculture and expansion of trade, with which the kings of India and the Vaisyas were then identified. The duties of different sections of Hindu Society, as well as the different stages of life, used to be regulated by the wisdom of the age for the peace and prosperity of a country and nation. All immoderation was inimical to health and peace of mind as well of men. One fault or crime renders another necessary, thus those who are once engaged in iniquitous designs are continually impelled downwards into a depth of guilt which at the commencement could have been stopped, if the parents and guardians had taken proper steps then and there. The guardians and parents who avoid doing anything in the present will be afflicted with grief in the future. This had been the case with Dhritarastra. Dhritarastra, Durjodhana and their wicked advisers were responsible for the ultimate destruction of the Kurus in the great battle of Kurukshettra. The unjust partition in the allotment of Khandavaprastha did not fulfil the object for which it was originally made, but it made the Pandavas very

famous and much stronger. They founded an empire which their forefathers could not do.

Man is often circumscribed in the narrow sphere of his own family, but such was not the case with the dutiful sages and chivalrous princes, the Pandavas and the Yadavas of ancient India, who loved their duty more than anything else. They created relationship with the wide family of the world. True benevolence inspires a sincere desire to promote the happiness of others instead of one's own or that of one's limited family circle. What would be the state of a society where the poor remained idle and lived on the benevolence of the rich, were the rich to be selfish and aggressive in regard to their wants and comforts! Rank, power and wealth cannot exempt man from doing the legitimate duties of human beings to help and improve the position of others along with his own, for over them he is called upon to administer. The earnest desire to promote the domestic happiness of all is so very essential in true politics; it is reflected in the works of the Pandavas as distinguished from that desire of the Kauravas in which self-love had all along been the real objective.

Poor men struggle for their existence and those who are not poor owe a duty to them to help them out of their difficulties. All great men of the world worship the true love of God, and they show sympathy amid the ruins of a fallen world to support the spirits of others and not the darkening cloud of unrepented guilt and tyranny. In the fire of Khandavaprastha it will be seen that this principle has been observed in the rescue of the fallen—beasts, birds and men. It proved that thought is immanent in God and is thus eternal and uncreated. The greatness of Krishna is there represented.

In Hindu Society chaste ladies of the past are worshipped for domestic peace and happiness and the wife is called the goddess of prosperity and peace. The great Draupadi looked after the five Pandava brothers, as the true housewife and Queen of Yudhisthira should. The general public mistook her for a common wife as the affection between them all was very great. The cap of calumny of the Kurus fitted well upon it. The story of Savitri, as told in the Mahabharata, proved beyond the shadow of a doubt that Draupadi could never be the wife of the five Pandavas, from the way the marriage was performed and described in the current Mahabharata. It is against the law and ethics of morality. The boon of a God cannot be unreasonable and against the injunction of the Hindu

Shastras. The name of Savitri has passed into a proverb all over India for her immortal love and stainless life. Every year on a certain day she is adored even now by millions of Hindu women who celebrate a rite in her honour all over India. Such a life imparts moral instruction to the millions of India, the value of which can never be overestimated. It is for this reason perhaps that the rite is observed with a religious ardour to emulate the high ideal. The life of the virtuous lady is well known. It will therefore, be enough to mention only that portion of it which has direct bearing on the point.

One day King Aswapati was enjoying the company of Narada when his daughter Savitri came there. Narada enquired from whence she came and why she was not married. "O divine father! She was sent on that very mission and you shall presently hear from her all about it." "Father," said she, "the pious Dyumatsen, having lost his sight, was deprived of his kingdom by a neighbouring prince. He, with his son and wife, retired to a forest to practise asceticism. To my mind his son Satyaban is my lord and husband."

"O my beloved girl," replied the king, "go and seek some one again. This Satyaban has a great defect which counterbalances all his merits. The great Narada informs me that he is not destined to live long, not even a year."

"O father," she said, "how can I do that? Having first settled a thing in the mind, it is expressed in words and is ultimately given effect to by act. I am the proof of it. The die is cast but once, *the daughter can once be bestowed and the words 'I bestow' are uttered but once.* Once only can the three things occur." "O king," said Narada, "your daughter is firm in her resolve. It is impossible to tempt her from virtue. Satyaban has rare parts not to be found in any other person and therefore I commend your daughter to be bestowed upon him." "Certainly," returned the King. "I shall do as you bid me." "May you be happy" were the words of Narada with which he bade the King *adieu*.

The marriage took place and Savitri followed her husband, leaving aside all her rich ornaments and dressed in barks of trees and clothes coloured red, as worn by her husband like the ascetics. She pleased all by her behaviour, but the words of Narada weighed upon her mind very heavily. She counted each day as it passed. She fasted three days and nights when she found at last only four days were remaining to complete the year. The old father-in-law tried in vain to persuade her to

take food. She finding her husband leaving for the wood alone with his hatchet on his shoulder begged of him to take her with him but he strongly protested. He was obliged to take her with him at the intervention of his father. Satyaban first gathered fruits in his wallet and began to work in earnest. Before long he was oppressed with a severe headache and could not stand any longer. He cried for help and his wife came to his rescue. He placed his head on her lap and swooned away. In a moment she saw a figure with a dark yellow complexion, red eyes, with a noose in his hands, quite dreadful to look at, in red garments, with a diadem shedding the lustre of the sun, standing before her and gazing steadfastly at her husband. She gently placed her husband's head on the ground, rose with a trembling heart, clasped her hands and addressed him sorrowfully:—

"From thy appearance I take thee to be a God. Pray let me know thy business."

"Know me, good lady," the spectre said, "I am Yama and come to carry your husband away." With these words he went to the South and when he found that Savitri was following him, he said, "Go back, good lady, perform the due rites of your husband. You are devoted and virtuous and it is for this reason that I address you. Your debt to him is now discharged."

"There are three modes of life," rejoined she, "domestic, celibate and ascetic. The first of these leads to Heaven and therefore the wise assert it to be the best of all. I care not for the others. I shall follow the footsteps of my husband, wherever he is led." Yama said: "I am very pleased with your words and conduct. I am ready to grant you everything except the life of your husband." "Just as you please," replied the lady, "let my father-in-law be restored to sight and be as powerful a King as the sun or fire." "Good," said Yama, "desist now, you seem to be too fatigued." "No, my lord," cried she, "I shall follow thee wherever thou shalt lead him on. Thy company will never go in vain." "Take another boon and retire," said Yama, "dead men cannot be brought back to life." "Very well, restore my father-in-law to his kingdom and make him ever mindful of his duties." Yama granted this. Likewise a few more were added whereby to perpetuate the distinguished line by giving her sons to prove to her a source of comfort so that she might be persuaded to retire. Then Yama was entreated to grant the life of her husband. The righteous make the sun go round the earth by their truthfulness and support it by asceticism. "Their

company," said she, "can only be productive of good. Their acts can never destroy one's honour or fidelity. There is nothing to apprehend from them. O lord of justice, the protector of all, the boon, with which I am blessed, will not be of any use to me unless my husband be brought back to life. I do not want happiness, prosperity or Heaven even, without my husband. May he be alive to prove thy words true." "O chaste and gentle lady," ejaculated the God Yama, "here is your husband. He shall be free from disease and be ever successful in his undertakings." The picture of domestic happiness of husband and wife is given.

The dialogue between Rama and Sita proves beyond the shadow of a doubt that true chastity depends not so much in keeping one's body free from the touch of another when powerless to prevent it, as upon the mind. What is the worth of anything without its use and trial? For fear of slander only, a king like Rama thought a fire ordeal necessary; whether it was actually necessary or not is very doubtful as it was followed by a prayer from all the Gods extolling him, as God of Gods, to take Sita back as she was faultless. However this shows clearly what dethroned chastity from its high ideal to a mere form of rites and ceremonies.

Why it was that Draupadi or her husband did not stand up against this falsehood may be understood in the lines of Shakespeare:

"When love begins to sicken and decay
It useth an enforced ceremony."

(*Julius Cæser*, Act IV, Sc. 2.)

RAMA: "The world is all before thee, flee;
Go where thou wilt, but not with me.
How should I brook the foul disgrace,
Scorned by my friends and all my race?"

SITA: "Doubt others if thou wilt, but own
The truth which all my life has shown.
If, when the giant seized his prey,
Within his hated arms I lay,
And felt the grasp I dreaded, blame
Fate and the robber and not thy dame.
What could a helpless woman do?
My heart was mine and still was true."

RAMA'S acceptance: "I know that Ravana would not wrong
My queen whom virtue made so strong,
Now to the worlds her truth is shown,
And Sita is again mine own."

Chastity has fallen short in practice of its own ideal standard. The immense majority of women are modest maidens and faithful wives from an instinctive feeling that they cannot be otherwise without losing caste and forfeiting their own self-respect and that of their neighbours. For this, the evolution of time alone is responsible.

True love is that which ennobles the personality, fortifies the heart and sanctifies the existence. The object of love must not be mysterious, but be endowed with wisdom so that admiration and attachment may grow from such a knowledge and not from the blind respect for the mere relation of man and wife. It is the true sentiment of love which creates fidelity in a woman. It is the forbidden fruit of Heaven, the beauty and charm of person that induces intercourse between man and woman and makes life a phantom of delight in the Vale of Tears. Man can never but be under the worst passion when he looks upon the frail body of his beloved spouse as the sole and immediate object of his love. He must never regard it as sufficient when his wife's body is protected from contamination. What is chastity, with the mere observances of rights and ceremonies intended to ensure courtesy and decorum, without the true light of love which leads to divine love, the ultimate aim of man, and the salvation of his soul?

"To love,
It is to be made of faith and service
All adoration, duty and observance,
All humbleness, all patience and impatience,
All purity, all trial, all observance."

Shakespeare.

In the Mahabharata (Vana Parvan) Draupadi preached the duties of a chaste housewife to the spouse of Krishna, Satyabhama. The stories of Sita, Savitri and Damayanti were told as examples of chastity in the Mahabharata. The great Rama Chandra on his way to the Swayamvara ceremony of Sita accepted the hospitality of Ahalya whom Brahma created as the most beautiful woman, whose charms captivated the King of Gods, Indra. He was said to have been guilty of trespassing on the modesty of the most beautiful wife of Goutama. The

appearance of Indra in the guise of her husband Goutama and consequent ravishing was made known, and Goutama in a fit of jealousy and anger asked his son to kill Ahalya. He went to practise Yoga in despair and was very much relieved to learn that his order was not carried out. It was said that Ahalya was petrified with shame like a stone and did not return to life again until she was cleansed of all sins of ommission and commission by the hospitality of Rama. The true implication of real chastity is presented in the Mahabharata in the soliloquies of Goutama and his son, which runs as follows:—

"Purandar came to my asylum in the guise of a Brahmana asking for hospitality. I gave him the rest he had asked for with due ceremony and further I told him that I found in him a protector. I thought by such conduct he would prove to me a friend, but he misbehaved himself with my wife Ahalya. She is not responsible for it, nor was the man who committed the sin by assuming my form. I should have known his antecedents first, before giving him shelter, and it is for this reason that I am to be blamed more than anyone else. It is my duty to protect my wife; she is incapable of doing it herself.

'God is the law, thou mine; to know no more
Is woman's happiest knowledge, and her praise!'

The sages have said that all calamities originate from envy which in its turn springs from mistaken judgment. Having also been dragged down by envy, I plunged into an ocean of sin. Alas! I killed a woman—a woman who had been my wife—one who, on account of her sharing her husband's misfortunes, passed by the name of Banita. She was called Varjya owing to my obligations to maintain her. Who is there now who can save me from this sin? I foolishly ordered my son Chirakarin, when carried away by anger, that enemy of mankind, to kill my wife. O! if on the present occasion he proved true to his name, then he might save me from this sin."

Goutama's son argued thus: "Even the very beast never kills its mother and what sin she has committed—Mother did everything in good faith and she was not warned of it even. How then could she smell foul-play? The husband is called Bhatri and Pati, as he maintains her and protects her. It is for this, it is said, in the Hindu Shastras that no sin attaches to a wife, but to her husband. I shall be justified in disobeying my father's order as he was blind with anger and did not realise his own position when he gave this order to me."

"Goutama, repenting in this way, after a long time came

back home. Seeing his son prostrated before him bowing his head in reverence and his wife petrified with shame, the great sage was filled with unbounded joy. The father praised his son and embraced him in an ecstasy of joy when he had heard from him what prevented him from obeying his order. ' Blessed be thou, O Chirakarin! you have by your wisdom saved us all.' "

The idea of a Godhead of love and sympathy which Sri Krishna represented in his early childhood (Gopal) may be said to be the real domestic God of India, who displaced Indra, the king of Gods, worshipped in the Vedas. The Hindu Cupid is the son of Sri Krishna and the chastiser of Brahma and Siva, and it was said that for this reason Cupid was burnt to ashes. The birth of Kartic, the Commander-in-Chief of Gods, to kill Tarakasura was necessary. Uma represents the ideal chastity as the wife of Siva, dying a martyr as she protested against her husband's calumny in her father's sacrifice, Daksha-Yajna, and is called Sati. She is represented in the other forms of Maha-Kali, Maha-Lakshmi and Maha-Saraswati in order to kill the Asuras who wanted to possess her. They were killed in the fight with the Goddesses. Such was the case with Ravana but with this difference that Ravana was killed by Sita's husband Rama Chandra. In the case of Draupadi things were quite different and novel.

Draupadi was the most beautiful creation of the age and the great heroine of the Mahabharata. Beauty is the work of virtue which God sets thereon—" Handsome is that handsome does." The presence of a higher spiritual element is essential to beauty's perfection. The high and divine beauty can be loved without human weakness. It must be a prospect pleasing to God Himself; that which does not sufficiently distinguish itself from the wicked world will never distinguish itself from the perishing world. Siva, the great God of the materialistic world, passed through the different stages of human life, conquered death and granted a boon to Draupadi to become the wife of the five Pandavas in the Pauranic Mahabharata, which implied that the divine love was to be found in the combination of the five good qualities of human knowledge. This is the lesson Draupadi preaches that the human family shall be bound together in one common bond of amity and love through domestic happiness. The five great warriors represent the perpetual progress which the soul makes towards the perfection of its nature. Draupadi was to shine for ever with new accessions of glory and brightness to all eternity. She was not destined to shine in

the lustre of pomp, the elegance of dress, the splendour of equipage and the acquisition of power; she did not act by the opinion of the world, observing custom and manners, but only mindful of securing the voice of fame.

The domestic happiness of ancient India did not end with existence of this world only, but was connected with the past, the present and the future. The light of religion sprang up with the shadow of Death, and the people, sitting in the darkness, saw the great light of Heaven. The conception of the Hindu God Yama who sits on the Day of Judgment is connected with the shadow of Death. Religion alone can teach the world with what principle and in what manner and by what means to shine in the world. Religion brings into the minds of men and women of all times the great question of Life and Death and their relation with God. Religion proposes to establish the welfare of society by positive regulations, and lays down a code for the government of mankind in all the varied walks of life; but an individual man or woman who has wrought, and will for ever work, the greatest and most salutary changes on society and who must be considered Super-human, are not to be judged by ordinary standards or examples of humanity. It is impossible for anyone who truly loves Hinduism to remain indifferent while he finds Draupadi covered with reproach and contempt. He sighs and sheds many a tear to see Hindu religion wounded in the worst fashion. Domestic happiness in ancient India depended not so much on the practice of religious rites and observances of the Age, as the realisation of the great ideals like Draupadi, Sita, Savitri, etc., who solved the difficult questions of religion in relation to divine love and to the spheres of action in actual domestic happiness in life.

Chapter XII.

Idols of Nations.

It was the established custom in ancient times for men to honour those who distinguished themselves at anything calculated to produce the greatest service to the greatest number. Feathers were presented to distinguished warriors after a battle, and these they wore on their heads. In the beginning men lived in terror of ferocious animals stronger than themselves, and they depended for their food mainly on hunting. But necessity is the mother of invention, and someone by accident discovered that fire might be produced in the forest by the friction of trees, another invented stone implements, and yet another the art of making a home as a protection from all inroads of Nature and animals, in which to sleep in peace. They learnt to use the milk of cows and goats and to cook their food. The greatest benefactor of mankind must have been the man who discovered how to till the ground, sow seeds and thus make sure of every day's food. The greatest liberator of mankind from base slavery was the man who tamed the horse, the bull and the camel to apply their whole strength to the moving of a load and used them for the transit of goods from one place to another—in the building of a house, a city or a dominion. All these discoveries would have been useless if there had been no harness, carts and drivers to help with the loads. No single mind was capable of arranging everything; no miracle or uncommon intelligence was responsible for it all. It was all a question of time. The developments of science, art, agriculture, philosophy and religion are all questions of time, and are the works of great collaborators, and are not confined to one man, to one great unknown inventor. Thus the minds of great men have worked out the solution of human happiness, and humanity as a whole will always be under a debt of deep gratitude to these idols of nations.

There was a time when men thought of themselves as the sport of gods, which led them to madness and despair. It was then that prayer was the only instrument considered capable of influencing higher agencies to solve the great problems

of life. Miracles were considered to lie around men and prayer was a means of communication as natural and simple as is speech to convey one's feelings to one's fellow-beings. This was the time of the Vedas. It was then little understood that the great universe is governed by the law of creation, that effect is connected with cause. If a thing moves, that movement must be attributed directly to some agent. If there be guidance and control, there must be agents who exerted them. There is a sort of guidance of God from above which is called instinct in the case of animals. For instance, the bird and beast feed and nurse their young, teach them to eat, fly or walk. But human beings are endowed with something higher than this instinct, known as intelligence, and this is advanced with age into knowledge and wisdom. It appears to be a stage beyond the cosmic region. The lower animals can hardly be punished for any sin or transgression of the well-known human laws against crime. The consciousness of crime, the active pursuit of degradation cannot arise in a bird or a beast, until something like a sense of human intelligence is reached. This was illustrated in the Piyani bird story of the Mahabharata.

The reclamation of the great forest of Khandavaprastha, regarded scientifically, may be said to be a great effort towards improving the general state of things by evolving something higher, holier and happier out of an inchoate mass by the labours of those great men, the Pandavas, under the guidance of a superman, Sri Krishna. The Pandavas left Hastinapur, where the greatest human defects of greed and jealousy and the forbidden fruits of civilisation grew apace, and founded the capital of Indraprastha out of the pristine forest of Indra, the King of Gods. This was the fight with him in the reclamation of the forest alluded to figuratively by the poet. It was a question of trespassing upon the laws of Physics, with which the rain god Indra was identified. Rain, like the rivers, was the great problem of agriculture in India, whose prosperity and happiness largely depended upon agricultural produce. The great author tried to place before the world the fact that pure automatism, with which the Kurus were identified, was an illusion of free will and power. The usual method of prosperity and happiness by sacrifice, through the mouth of the fire, was openly condemned, and illustrated in the setting on fire of the great forest to cure the disease of aversion from food, due to the practice of eating animal flesh in the sacrifice. The Mahabharata aims at the undoing of

animal sacrifice, and for that it begins with the fight between the sages and gods on this point at the sacrifice of the Maghadha King, Uparichara Basuhoma. He at first decided in favour of animal sacrifice, but was convinced of his mistake and performed the sacrifice with corn in honour of Narayana, and thus introduced it in India. Animal food was then prohibited in India and agriculture was consequently very advanced. Sri Krishna Vasudeb was identified with God Narayana. The worship of Narayana in the reclamation of Khandavaprastha was quite clear and evident. Besides, the capital of Indraprastha was given by Yudhisthira to Prince Bajra, the surviving descendant of Sri Krishna, in the last scene of the Mahabharata.

In ancient India idols and images of clay or metal, representing forms of Nature, were worshipped in villages, towns and houses. The worshipper believed that God dwelt with a body not made up of matter. The domestic god Sri Krishna with his mate is even worshipped. In the Mahabharata all these were thrown out. The major portion of the Mahabharata represented that Vishnu, the Vedic god, was reflected in Narayana. Satapatha Brahmana (XII.3.4) said that Purusha Narayana was represented to have sent forth from the place of sacrifice Vasus, Rudras and Adityas by means of the morning, midday and evening libations, respectively, and he alone was said to have remained in the place. This was repeated, though not so clearly, in the story of the sacrifices of King Uparichara Basuhoma in the Mahabharata. Suffice it to say that Narayana assumed the dignity of the supreme soul of the universe. The late Sir R. G. Bhandarkar in his book, "Vaisanavism, Saivism and Minor Religious Systems," (page 3) says:—" A Buddhist who cannot but be expected to show scant courtesy to religious systems other than his own, places the worshippers of Vasudeva and Baladeva on the same level with those of fire, moon, sun and Brahma, and even elephants, crows, dogs, etc. But the worship of Vasudeva was destined to become the predominent religion of a large part of India, even to the supersession of that of fire, sun, moon and Brahma and, of course, of the superstitious adoration of the lower animals."

The worship of Vasudeva must date from the time of Panini, for Patanjali, in his comment on Panini, distinctly states that the Vasudeva in the *sutra* meant a worshipped God. In Luders' list of Brahmi inscriptions, No. 6 (Ghosumdi inscription

in Rajputana), Vasudeva and Sankarsana are associated as worshipped gods. The learned Bhandarkar says that it appears to have been engraved at least in 200 B.C. from the form of the characters in the inscription, but in his considered opinion states: "Vasudeva was worshipped as the god of gods and his worshippers were called Bhagavatas. The Bhagavata religion prevailed in the north-western part of India and was adopted even by the Greeks." Besnagar inscription No. 669 gives out that Heliodora, the son of Diya and a native of Taksila, who called himself a Bhagavata, erected a column with the image of Garuda at the top in honour of Vasudeva. He was spoken of as an ambassador of the Yavana to the court of Northern Malwa, ruled by Bhagbhadra. The Christian religion may be an offshoot of the religion of Vasudeva and Balarama (Sankarsan).

Bhandarkar in his book says:—" At the time when the Gita was conceived and composed, the identification of Vasudeva with Narayana had not taken place, nor had his being an incarnation of Vishnu come to be acknowledged, as appears from the work itself. Vasudeva was Vishnu in this sense, as mentioned in Chapter X, because the best thing of a group or class is represented to be his Vibhuti or special manifestation." The name of the author of the Mahabharata and the God Vasudeva seems to be connected with the word Krishna or Krisna. The Gotra name is Krishna or Krishnayana, which corresponds to a Brahman or Gotra Kanhayanan belonging to the Parasara sub-division (*vide* Matsya Purana, Chapter CC. Parasottama's Pravaramanjari, Mysore Edition). A Kshatriya assumed the Gotra of a Brahman in sacrificial functions.

It was in Patanjali's time that God Vasudeva came to be known in the four forms of Vasudeva, Sankarsana, Pradyumna and Aniruddha, which is mentioned in the Mahabharata, but the Gita (VII, 4.5) says that the Prakritis of Vasudeva are the *five* elements, *viz.*, mind, knowledge, egoism, fire, etc. The Bhagavata school was taught by Narayana *to* Brahma Prajapati, the grandfather, and by him *to* Daksha, Vivasvata, Manu and Ikshaku. According to Asvalayana Sutra (XII.15), the Gotra and the ancestors invoked by the Kshatriya are those of the priests or chaplains and the only sage ancestors that all the Kshatriyas have are Manava, Aila and Paururavasa. This was the essence of the two kinds of worship, Devayana and Pitriyana, in the Mahabharata. All traditions about the learning and spiritual insight of Brahma,

the grandfather, were engrafted on the fictitious Bhisma as a grandfather. The evolution of monotheism in Krishna worship out of polytheism is quite clear and patent in the Mahabharata. The Ekantika Dharma, found and explained in the Hari Gita, is nothing but the cult of Bhakti or love of one God. Ramanuja composed a commentary on Badarayan's Brahmasutra as it was very necessary to maintain the doctrine of Bhakti, or love, in the face of the theory of Advaita, or monism of spirit, set up by the great Sankaracharjya as based upon the Brahmasutras and the Upanishads.

Dr. Bhandarkar in his book says :—" During the period of the revival of Brahmanism and Hinduism there was such a fermentation of thought as that which existed when Buddhism, Jainism and other heterodox systems on the one hand, and Vasudevism on the other, arose." The most rational explanation of the four forms of God on earth is given by Sri Krishna himself to Arjuna in Drona Parvan, Chapter XXIX: " One of my semblances, remaining on earth, is even now practising ascetic austerities Another keeps an eye over the world, engaged in good and evil deeds. My third semblance, staying in the world of men, is engaged in the performance of acts; and my fourth semblance sleeps a sleep extending over four thousand years. This last-mentioned semblance of mine that awakes at the end of every thousand years, accords excellent boons at that time, to those who really deserve them. Ever occupied as I am in achieving the welfare of the worlds, I have four semblances. Dividing myself into parts I do try to bring about the world's benefit." Those men who devote their lives to the good of the country and of their fellow men in these four forms of God, were the idols of the nations of India. It was not the Trinity of the Hindu or Christian religions of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Ghost. The religion that the Mahabharata preaches is the most rational view of positive good to the world in thought, action, joy of body, mind and spirit in the creation, and it preaches the final withdrawal of the powers of God in the creation as its end. It is, in fact, the worship of Divine Love in the five elements of Nature and in the spirit above and earth below.

The Pandavas, under the tutelage of Sri Krishna, demonstrated that kind of worship in all the actions of their life, together with Draupadi. Sri Krishna was credited with the founding of Dwarka—an island—and Indraprastha—the old Delhi. The former was his own fortified residence, his own love

bower, and was not for his heirs, and the other was for the glory and majesty of the Pandavas, where Yudhisthira and Draupadi would be the Emperor and Empress of India and he be declared one of the greatest of the great gods of greater India. There his services to the Brahmans and the Kshatriyas were recognised in that great state function, the Rajasuya Yajna, where he removed his great enemy Sisupala by a blow of his discus. There also Bhisma came into prominence as a Bhagavata espouser of the cause of Sri Krishna. Sri Krishna warned Sisupala several times that he was abusing his patience, and he was killed when he exceeded it. Sri Krishna staked his glory on the ground of patience and forbearance. Bhisma and Drona, who terrified death itself by their exemplary courage, chivalry and valour and who survived the wreckage of the age and were stronger than the most robust of the young, were poetic creations of the reviser. Yudhisthira plainly told the assembly that the place of religious dominance should not be made a convenience for preaching heresy or other vile practices in which Sisupala and others indulged. Here argued and reasoned devotion was shown to Sri Krishna and not mere blind faith. Yudhisthira's mind and heart were too upright to tell a lie. This was the essence of the religion which the author meant to breathe into the hearts of his audience of the kings of India.

It cannot be overlooked that the names Krishna Dwaipayana and Krishna Vasudeva are connected by the word Krishna. Krishna built his palace of love in the island of Dwarka and the birth of Vyasa was said to have taken place on an island of the Jamuna. The river Jamuna was the scene of the early love exploits of Krishna. The birth of Vyasa was the fruit of carnal love between the great sage Parasara and Satyabati, daughter of Basuhoma, as if Heaven could not think of any better seed and soil than the stern austerity of Parasara and the maiden purity of Satyabati for Vyasa's birth, and there was no sin or shame in the connection of Niyoga in the births of Pandu and Dhritarastra and Vidura with the immaculate purity of Vyasa and the love of duty in the faithful wives of Bichitravirya, Ambica and Ambalika. These paradoxes may have been the result of the peculiar tendency of an age when the use of the water of the sacred Ganges for casting off sins of commission and omission on earth was prevalent, but they were more likely the fruits of a poetic imagination seeking to give pleasure and create a taste for enjoyment in the assembly. The great question of Varnasankar raised in the

Bhagabata Gita should not be lost sight of. Codes of morality are always judged not by the action itself but by the real motives behind it. It must be said that it is more to one's honour than to one's disgrace to convince the world of the value of self-control in the worst passion of lust—which Brahma and Siva could not control—making virtue the ultimate aim of the master of science and not the fell desire of satisfying the senses. It was held that Vyasa gave birth to Dhritarastra and Pandu to perpetuate the great Bharata dynasty. Dhritarastra was born blind, so Pandu was necessary. He came from the womb of another queen, Ambalika. Madayanti, the queen of King Kalmaspada, was said to have been blessed with a son by Vasistha in the same way. It was then believed that without a son one could not be delivered from Hell and go to Heaven. It reflected the high sense of duty and true love for the departed husband in a widow to send him to Heaven by the birth of a child. The mystery of the relationship of love and passion and the question of Varnasankar in the relation of religion and virtue was sought to be solved by Krishna Dwaipayana, Vyasa and Krishna Vasudeva in Raslila. In the Mahabharata the discourse between the famous King Janaka and the most learned and pious maid Sulava enunciates the niceties of the points at issue.

In the Golden Age there lived an ascetic learned daughter of a sage named Sulabha. She practised Yoga and travelled all over the earth. She heard from many ascetics of different places that Janaka, King of Mithila, had attained the highest goal of religion, and she wanted to test him so she went to his capital. She was granted an audience, and the King was astonished at the beautiful delicacy of her form and features. She asked the King to enlighten her on the point of religion called emancipation.

"There are three paths," said the King, "to attain it. Some hold action, some say wisdom, others declare renunciation material for its attainment. But to my mind, nothing can be gained without wisdom. The mere adoption of the emblems of a particular mode of life or the mere renunciation of all the pleasure of the senses can hardly make one reach the goal. If, after seeing the miseries of domestic life, one renounces it and adopts another mode of life, he cannot be considered free from all attachments. The question of emancipation does not arise in poverty or in riches. If one can truly renounce all the attachments that flesh is heir to, with

a true knowledge of self and its relation to the Prime Cause, then, and only then, O lady, Emancipation is possible. I entertain an affection for you, but that should not preclude me from telling you that your conduct does not conform to the dress and emblems you put on. The triple stick is unfit for a Yogini (female ascetic) who has desires about her. You have the audacity to enter into my heart without first obtaining my leave. You belong to the foremost of all orders, the Brahmans; as for me, I am a Kshatriya, and no union is possible for us two. Try not to cause an inter-mixture of castes, which is decidedly a sin. There is no knowing, even, if your husband is alive or not."

At this the lady was not at all abashed but firmly replied to his words thus, which brought him to his senses: "I shall not speak anything out of anger or fear, you know that very well, or out of cupidity or abjectness, deceit or shame, mercy or pride. Lac, wood, grains of dust and drops of water exist and are not lost even when mixed. Such is the existence of us all on earth. The five organs alone cannot perform their functions by themselves, for the eyes cannot see unless there are light and form. Then again they depend on mind for their action. When any doubts arise, the conscience decides everything for us. Besides these, there are eighteen principles of Hindu philosophy, such as Satya, Ahankar, Desire, Abidya (nescience), Nature, its manifestations, Time, etc., on which human action depends. There are various opinions as to the prime cause of all these, but suffice it to say that those who are conversant with the spiritual science, hold Nature as their cause. All that we hold, therefore, are the result of Nature, including ourselves. The constituent elements of a body undergo changes every moment, but they cannot be marked. As fire is generated by contact, so every creature is created from the combination of thirty principles which exist in the body. Nature, or Prakriti, when it is united with soul or Purush—can there be any fear or a sin of Varnasankar (intermingling of castes)? Such fear appears to those who look upon the body as quite inseparable from the soul. My body can be different from that of yours, but not my soul. He cannot be said to have attained to the high principles of emancipation who considers that the sense of touch has any reference to the soul of man or woman. I regret that you are not what I heard of you."

Heredity in the caste system was then a thing unknown. It

was work which entitled men to the distinct orders of caste and not birth. Had it not been so, could Yajati, a scion of the Kuru race, think of marrying Sarmistha, daughter of Sukracharjya, a Brahmin of Brahmins and a law-giver? And furthermore his sons by Sarmistha were not considered Varnasankar. There is, in fact, no sin if a man does a thing not for the sake of satiating his desires but as an imperative duty, not for the sake of present enjoyment but for ultimate good. The vicious look of a libertine may be offending, but not the hand of a doctor in the delivery of a child. It is the intention which is the index to virtue or vice. The poison which at times kills a man instantly, at others cures deadly maladies. The ancient law-givers were not the idols of nations, for the law is not uniform in every country and is not respected by every nation implicitly. The idea of Varnasankar in ancient India originated with anger, jealousy, vanity and selfishness. Man and woman are free creatures. It is a strange irony of fate that men and women are often criminals in the sight of great men on earth, not merely for having committed any crimes or sins but because they know crimes were committed. This is the great lesson the learned Sulava preached in the open Court of the Mithila King, Janaka. Vyasa is one of the idols of the Indian World. The development of heredity in the caste system proves that an ambitious man covets what is beyond his station of life and merit. Manu says that the Niyoga system was not permissible in the twice-born classes of Hindu society. Alas! there was so much suffering on earth then that a King like Vena, who had drunk so deeply of the cup of enjoyment, was removed from his sphere of activity by being killed. It was for the good of society that Vena was killed by the sages and Prithu was raised in his place. The sages were once the idols of nations and were much respected with the thread across their shoulders. But when Vyasa and Krishna flourished with the Pandavas they degenerated. What Sri Krishna must have preached from his very boyhood may be summarised thus :—

"Brothers, Sisters and Mothers, Heaven created us all to love every one and not to fight. A barbarous prejudice has condemned one to pass his days in obscurity, far from all men and deprived of every joy of life. Restore yourself to that position in the sunshine of domestic love, fortune and glory in which you are destined to live in the memory of men and women. Confer lustre on the caste or race into which you

are born, not only by deeds of valour, but by solid benefits bestowed upon the nation as a whole. If from the present depths of sorrow you can raise yourself to the very height of honour, then to you I shall offer my power and glory and hand of help, the great privilege and the heritage of the age of loving and being loved in the World."

For this reason the Hindus worship God as a child Gopal, full of unselfish love, which blesses the hearts of parents so that they breathe the essence of divine love on earth. It is for this the parents of Sri Krishna were released from the cruel prison of Kangsa, who usurped his father's throne. Sri Krishna removed the tyrant Kangsa and replaced his father Ugrasen, refusing to accept the throne even when it was offered to him. In the emblems of true love of God and Nature, Sri Krishna is worshipped with his mate, resplendent with the glory of divine love. Sri Krishna was an incarnation of divine love and for this he was in youth found in the forest of Brindaban to prepare the boys and girls to become his worshippers hereafter. He went to Mathura to remove the tyrant Kangsa from the throne and saved that city from the attacks of Kangsa's father-in-law, the most powerful Jarasandha, times out of number, and built his own castle of love on the island of Dwarka. He was with the Pandavas at Khandavaprastha to build their own kingdom and their capital at Indraprastha. It was said that Durjodhana was helping Jarasandha to seize Mathura. The brain and hand of Sri Krishna were ever busy in the restoration of the true religion good for India. It was for this reason that a King who could practise and preach his religion of divine love in India was a necessity. Yudhisthira was such a King and his brothers were his necessary helpmates. Draupadi was the queen of Yudhisthira and his helpmate in the task before him. Draupadi looked upon Sri Krishna as her true friend and preceptor. She was blessed with the boon of becoming the Empress of India by Sri Krishna. He had to fulfil his boon and for that he was in the field of Khandavaprastha with Vyasa to bring everything to a successful conclusion within a very short time.

The ethical tone of the heroic age stands highest of all and owes its growth to the strength of domestic affections. These constituted a prominent feature of the mythology and epic of both the East and West. Zeus cared for the noble and gallant Sarpedon, Ares for Ascalaephus and Aphrodite for Aeneas.

In the Trojan royal family the affections of Priam and Hecuba Hector and Andromache were prominent, while Odysseus was known as the father of Telemachus. The father of Odysseus pined for his return and his mother died of a broken heart due to his absence. Penelope prayed for death to end her twenty years' separation from her husband. Human interests are displayed by the domestic affections. Concern for the future becomes the spring of noble actions. The glorious memory of the past, likewise, engenders emulation of its greatness. Generations of men are thus knit together in the Devayana and Pitriyana forms of worship associated with the two different lineages of Kings in India. The primitive poet of such a country as India cannot but be an historian. The intensity of the poets' admiration for beautiful forms and features is displayed in Sakuntala, Devayani, Sarmistha, Draupadi, etc. The gloating eyes of the old men follow Draupadi in India as they followed Helen in Troy. The epic is a history of the general manners, customs and forms of worship of the nations in the countries of the East and West. The morality of childhood, youth and manhood is shown in the contrasting aspects of characters to raise every level of the different periods of life. There arose in written law a sort of public testimonial to truth, honesty, justice and virtue in terms of the regular forms of political, social and civil administration of a country. Law and order were respected for the fuller enjoyment of the fruits of labour and energy. Each man acted upon a recognition of the rights of property combined with a consideration of qualification and merit over birthright, power or lineage. The speculative intellect of man was also shown at work to establish abstract theories of virtue and vice, and their consequences were limned in such a comprehensive manner as to put out of countenance the indeterminate ethics of remote antiquity. The duties of man and woman, brother and sister, wife and husband, children and parents and, last though not least, priests and deities, were worked out, in a deep sense of reverence and a dread of Divine Justice, to keep in restraint all vice, sin, anger, jealousy and envy. The great Sri Krishna is represented in the Mahabharata, not as a God of Gods, receiving oblations in the Royal sacrifices of Yudhisthira, but as a man appearing before men in distress to guide them through their difficulties by his reasoned advice in social and political assemblies, and attending and assisting in great sacrifices to the Gods. He does not bear arms for his country

on his friend or any ally, nor has he taken any part in the government of any country. He has to maintain all through his life a kindly and free relationship not only with his own near and dear ones, but with everyone who is in need of his services. His early youth amidst the most beautiful girls of Brindaban is not corrupted in any way with any sensual excesses beyond developing Divine Love in their company and making them students of it—to become masters in due time. He was, in fact, one of the ideal makers of India, who preached and practised the philosophy of Divine Love. He proved that God never demanded any sacrifice other than that of sensual enjoyments. There is but one God in the soul of the universe, Who seeks union in the soul of men and women through true religion, the spirit of soul and love. God does not create anything for His own enjoyment, nor helps anyone, but his love in spirit is omnipresent, omnipotent, omniform and omniscient. He can only be seen, realised and felt in the spirit of love, obedience, friendship, companionship or any of the domestic relationships one may care to establish with Him. God is eternal, so are His spirit, soul and love, severally and jointly. All ties of earthly love can be broken and produce the greatest misery and unhappiness, but heavenly love is not so. Narayana, Narada, Vyasa and Sri Krishna preached and practised it and for that reason they were the idols of the nations of ancient India. They were the images of Divine Love, which the Mahabharata preached. The Hindu religion rests on Dharma, Artha, Kama and Mokshya, and those who are successful are immortal, as is the soul of all living beings. The Pandavas were represented as Dharma, Artha, Kama, etc., and they were thus the idols of nations, and divine births were ascribed to them by their worshippers. The great philosophical historian Buckle held that climate, soil, food and aspects of nature are the determining factors in the intellectual progress of a country. This was aimed at in the burning of Khandavaprastha and the building of Indraprastha. It was a step forward in the history of the civilisation of India and could not be anything else. The great Vyasa, as a historian, was not ignorant of the most important fact that there was an intimate relationship between human actions and physical laws on which the success of any human enterprise largely depended. The development of art and science was exhibited in the building of wonderful mansions for the great Rajasuya sacrifice of Yudhisthira.

Chapter XIII.

Miracle and Maya.

To define "Miracle" and "Maya" is not difficult, but so many are the questions put about them and so rarely are these answered, that no progress is made towards the solution of these questions of great importance. Miracle may mean merely an event occurring once in a hundred years or so of which one does not know the history or cause. The birth of Sri Krishna and his escape from the prison of Kangsa might easily have been effected by bribing the guards. It is not like the virgin birth of Christ, which is a miracle. The above incident of Sri Krishna's life could have been possible had the guards been moved by pity and sympathy into allowing the substitution of a girl for a boy, which may be called the work of Maya. The most important episode in the death and defeat of the mighty monarch Jarasandha in the Mahabharata is rather miraculous. The request to perform the great sacrifice of Rajasuya came not from Sri Krishna but from Yudhisthira's dead father, Pandu, whose wishes were communicated to Yudhisthira by the divine Minstrel Narada after the building of Indraprastha. It was said that Pandu wanted to reach the domain which King Harish Chandra was enjoying by the performance of Rajasuya Sacrifice. This gave rise to an important question of religion—the theory of death and of continued personal existence after it. In the Hindu religion it was not a question of the empty tomb of Christ, which is a miracle. The City of Indraprastha was, it seemed, laid on the solid foundations of religion and faith, concerning which science has not yet discerned a satisfactory basis. It was not phantasmal or merely supported by legend, for its remains are still visible near Old Delhi and its traditions linger.

The survival of man after death is a burning question of the day amongst psychical research societies on the Continent. Washington Irving says :—"What could be more consoling than the idea that the souls of those we once loved were permitted to return and watch over our welfare? That affectionate and guardian spirit sat by our pillows when we slept, keeping a vigil over our most helpless hours? That beauty and innocence,

which had languished into the tomb, yet smiled unseen around us, revealing themselves in those blest dreams wherein we live over again the hours of past endearments? A belief of this kind would, I should think, be a new incentive to virtue, rendering us circumspect, even in our most secret moments, from the idea that those we once loved and honoured were invisible spectators of all our actions." The poet Cowper might, as it were, have sung the secret wish of the departed Pandu in these lines: "O for a lodge in some fast wilderness, some boundless contiguity of shade." This is one of the brightest examples of the work of Maya in the religion of God above, the spirit of the Universe.

This was the mission of Narada, who visited King Yudhisthira, who assumed the title of Ajatasatru, or "enemyless," by his conduct and temperament. He treated all his subjects as if they were his own family members. Bhima ruled them justly without any partiality. Arjuna used both his hands to protect them. Sahadeva administered justice evenhanded, and Nakul pleased everyone with his humility. The people were very happy under their rule and were very much attached to them. They were ever ready to sacrifice their very lives for them. King Yudhisthira consulted his priest Dhaumya, Vyasa and others but could not decide one way or the other without knowing the mind of Sri Krishna. He sent a messenger to him requesting his presence there.

Sri Krishna flourished to convert the dreams of wise sages like Vyasa into realities. It was for this reason that they were interallied with the gotra name of Krishna—Krishna Dwaipayana and Krishna Vasudeva. He was born in the prison of Kangsa, the incarnation of jealousy, envy and passion. With his birth the chains binding his parents broke, the prison gates were thrown open, the guards fell asleep and the father, Vasudeva, left the prison with the child, exchanging it for a girl from Brindaban. No sooner had all this transpired than the guards awoke with the cries of the girl in their ears and found everything as it had been before. King Kangsa was informed of this in the morning. The birth of Sri Krishna took place at mid-night. The King was astonished to find the prophecy had been falsified. In place of a boy he found a girl. He thought over it and at last decided to kill the girl. The girl escaped from the hand of the executioner in the presence of the King, who smelt some foul play in the birth and, therefore, wanted the execution to take place before him. The girl went up to the sky above,

heralding the advent of Sri Krishna, growing in Brindaban (Gokul), to fulfil the ends of justice and the aim of Heaven. This is a Miracle, and the girl is Mâya. The name of the architect of Indraprastha spells the same Maya or Mâya.

Voices from Heaven were heard as warnings to the great tyrants of the age. The great western poet, Shakespeare, mentions this in the case of Julius Caesar, whose wife dreamt the event and before whose assassination many other ominous signs appeared. Vyasa acted similarly in the case of Jarasandha in the Mahabharata. The works of creation and destruction of the material World, it is said, are all done through natural phenomena. The earth disappears in flood, earthquake and volcanic eruptions. The great Asuras were killed with the thunder of Heaven, and the God Indra was said to be the wielder of the same and blessed the earth with rain and prosperity. The name of the new city that Yudhisthira founded bore the name of Indraprastha because Arjuna and Bhima, with Sri Krishna, fought with the growth of Nature and her guardian Indra, and conquered them by their energies.

Tyrants by their foolishness work out individual ruin and death. The Indian epics illustrate this in Kartabiryarjuna, Ravana, Kangsa, Sisupala and Jarasandha. Kangsa invited Krishna and Balarama to witness the sacrifice he was then performing and was killed by them. Ravana stole the wife of Rama Chandra and was destroyed. Sri Krishna was a great man of the age. He had a very deep insight into things and a true knowledge of the affairs of the world. He waited for an opportunity to strike a decisive blow for the destruction, defeat and death of Jarasandha. Time and circumstances are the two most important factors in human life, and the weapons of great Nature, Maya, or Prakrit. The laws of creation are manifest in measured steps of time and circumstances, day and night, weeks, fortnights, months, seasons and ages of Satya, Treta, Dwapara and Kali. Nothing wastes time more than miscalculation—it is productive not merely of waste of time but of energy often used to one's own ruin and misery. An opportunity, if it is not utilised, goes for nothing. Success and fortune are dependent on the utilisation of opportunities as they present themselves. It is not a question of previous birth or the boon of the Gods above, as idlers dream. It is a question of the tact, ability and wisdom of a man who can wait patiently for an opportunity to arise, even to the extent of yielding ground to his opponent.

It was for this reason Jarasandha was allowed to grow and the

great Sri Krishna retired to Dwarka. The former's kingdom became too unwieldy for him to manage. Instead of diverting all his energy to the consolidation of his kingdom, he thought of declaring himself Emperor of India. He foolishly imprisoned eighty-six kings of India in his capital at Giribraja, intending to sacrifice them in a religious ceremony to the material God Siva, to become Emperor of India. Sri Krishna was not the man to lose such an opportunity of removing the tyrant from the throne. The near and dear relations of these imprisoned kings were anxious for their release and were secretly holding conferences. But they could not find a leader to guide them in the great task. At last they approached Sri Krishna, and Narada was their messenger. The divine minstrel was famous for solving the problems of the day. He visited Yudhisthira and gave him a hint as to the purpose of his visit to Sri Krishna. Narada must have communicated the intention and readiness of the families of the kings to help in anything which would save the lives of those imprisoned kings and stop the cruel massacre. The effect of such a horrible sacrifice on the cause of civilisation can better be imagined than described. The sentiment of religion, if corrupted into superstition, has little efficacy in fortifying the duties of the civil and military administration of a country. Mercenary troops were employed to guard the kingdom and throne of a King like Jarasandha. The troops were not then impressed with the great idea of preserving a religion and a country on the basis of nationality and home. Religion provides a connecting link with the present, past and future when it is based on national grounds in a string of harmonious actions for preserving one's hearth and home, heart and soul, in the great idea of past sufferings and future salvation.

The time of Sri Krishna and Jarasandha is the Dark Age, and not the Satya Yuga when the Asuras were killed with the powers of beauty, and the odes to the great goddesses of Nature are still sung in India in the Chandi. The Goddesses were Singabahini, Durga, Kali, etc. The western poet even realised it and sang :—

"Horns to bulls wise Nature lends;
Horses she with hoofs defends;
Hares with nimble feet relieves;
Dreadful teeth to lions gives;
Fishes learn through streams to slide;
Birds through yielding air to glide;
Men with courage she supplies;

But to women these denies.
What then gives she?
Beauty, this both arms and armour is;
She, that can this weapon use,
Fire and sword with ease subdues."

Jarasandha, the great King of Maghadha, was a descendant of Uparichara Basuhoma, whose sacrifices with animal flesh and finally with love were the subject matter of a great fight between the ancient sages and the Devas who received oblation. This was the subject matter of discussion and settlement in the worship of Narayana in the first opening chapter of the Mahabharata. The birth of the king was kept in mystery. His father, King Brihadratha, had two wives and had no sons. The sages of those days were great professors of medical science and could give medicines which made the queens prolific. The king got a mango from a sage for the purpose and, out of foolishness, gave the fruit not to one of his queens but satisfied both of them by dividing it in equal shares. The result was the queens gave birth to two half parts of a child and in despair threw them away. The science of maternity was then practised by witches. Jara came to their rescue and joined the two portions and revived them into life. This was the origin of Jarasandha. The king was pleased with the witch and a great festival in her honour, as the household goddess, was celebrated.

Sri Krishna was celebrated for having spoiled the effort of King Kangsa, who hired the services of Putana to destroy the infant transferred to Brindaban. The death of Putana from natural consequences might have been a strange coincidence. The Jara has a special significance in the Mahabharata. Yajati suffered very much with his two wives and was crushed with Jara. There it meant the cantankerous conduct of Devayani and here it might mean the same, that out of jealousy the child born of one queen was sought to be killed by another but was saved by a midwife who attended the child. Maternity work is still confined to a low class of women, like the witches of old. The germ of a comprehensive epic is more recognisable in the anecdotes related either to amuse or ridicule the audience than as a novel or a drama in a later stage of development. God never rules the Universe through His might and power but by His love. But those who have trampled on His love become rebels or tyrants. They create fear in men's hearts by cruelties and rule the earth by the force of their brute strength and through the skill of arms. Ravana and Jarasandha were

such tyrants who used to strike terror into the hearts of the Kings and Princes of India; and they were removed by the right exercise of reason and judgment at the opportune moment by the devoted heroes of the age, who were taught and trained for victory amidst trials, dangers and hardships and who were always vigilant about warding off the cruel hands of death and destruction. The Pandavas were brought up like this from their very infancy and not like the Kuru or other princes of India. Nor was this all. They lived in the society of men who were the guiding stars of the true moral and religious virtues. They were more powerful than ordinary princes of India by the constant exercise of their skill in arms and of their bodies. They were members of society who were always mindful of the advancement of the moral, intellectual and spiritual qualities of mankind and they were blessed with the companionship of many great men of the age of whom the most prominent was Sri Krishna.

Sri Krishna advised Yudhisthira to rule the earth by the wisdom and might of his brothers, and for that reason he wanted to take with him Bhima and Arjuna to kill Jarasandha and secure for him the empire of India without much carnage. Yudhisthira readily complied with his wholesome advice without a word of protest. The love of pleasure or the love of sway never carried any weight with him, but to save the lives of the imprisoned princes was his only thought. Sri Krishna did not tempt him but only showed the necessary consequence of the state of things which would ensue. The superior wisdom of Sri Krishna saw the mechanical process of success by the *pros* and *cons* of all the circumstances, and the best opportunities he found out by thinking and reasoning. There were very few thinkers like Sri Krishna, who could pursue the right course of events and trace their subsequent consequences. It was this which gave him the wonderful foresight of events on account of which he was able to bless men with fortune on earth. It was for this that men who followed him and were in constant company with him were rewarded with the crown of success. The general public judged him as a God by these results.

Even a tyrant like Jarasandha was surprised at the appearance before him of three visitors without his knowledge, which could only be possible with the Gods and spirits above. He actually paid obeisance to them and wanted to become a devoted votary. He could not believe that they were men with the true descriptions they gave. This is the value of having insight

of things before undertaking any action. Sri Krishna, Arjuna or Bhima, none of them was afraid to go to the citadel of an enemy in the condition that they did. A military spirit had universally diffused itself throughout the length and breadth of India and the followers of the Kshatriya race were represented in this trio. Their minds were elevated by their princely situation and greedily embraced the most hazardous enterprises like this. Their genius for chivalry and success outshone their impatience of peace and tranquillity. They were ever ready to embark on any dangerous fight, irrespective of the ultimate consequences. They were accustomed to nothing else from their very infancy. A sort of natural inclination was created in them to risk their own lives to snatch the prize of valour.

The age displayed the splendid martial adventure of the Kshatriya youths, with their beauty of person, their wonderful growth and bodily frame and their skill in the use of arms and their method of wrestling. Everyone was anxious to spread his fame and name beyond his own realm or country. Everyone was watching for an opportunity of scoring a signal victory over a well-known hero of the age for his elevation and great glory. These victories in great measure so raised them in those days in the eyes of people to the extent that they were welcomed as their Kings and protectors. Bhima and Arjuna were not negligible characters in the Mahabharata, they were not the knights-errant of their age. They were the great warriors who fought to remove the bond of slavery from the Kings in India under the régimes of the great tyrant Jarasandha and of Durjodhana.

Sri Krishna and Balarama were born to remove the great obstacles to civilisation and religious thought in ancient India thus advancing them for future generations. Every character, who was a true man or woman, secured for their help the greatest prize from Heaven that could be offered to him or her, and Providence crushed those who were not eager to help. These were the works before Sri Krishna and Balarama. Draupadi was married to Yudhisthira and so was Subhadra to Arjuna. Subhadra was the sister of Sri Krishna and Balarama. Arjuna and Subhadra's marriage was a question of mutual love. It grew when Arjuna went to pass a few days with them at their place. It was Sri Krishna who allowed them to be united although even Balarama took strong objection to it on the ground of decency of manners and the sanction of superiors. The first happy

event after the partition was the marriage ceremony of Arjuna and Subhadra, as also that of Bhima with the princess of Benares. Thus the superman, Sri Krishna, stood a head and shoulders above all who were then in power and place. He disliked to wade through slaughter to a throne and shut the gates of mercy on mankind. He did not do it himself and tried his best to avert it in the case of others. His greatness did not lie only in the field of politics and religion but also in the sphere of divine love.

A man of an upright and amiable spirit will not suffer himself to be carried away or imposed upon by all sorts of loose and idle reports circulated by malice. He knows the value of mutual good offices of friendship and society in which one enjoys the happiness and enjoyment of life. Youth is the age when one has to cultivate and cherish a temper on which so much of the peace and harmony of a society and family depends. The children of God have only sweet lives. The guilty World ascribes bad motives to such lives. Riches, power, luxury, worldly pleasures and sensual enjoyments did not form part of their lives. Sri Krishna and Balarama, or the Pandavas, did not fall in love with beautiful girls. Jealousy and suspicion are the most hateful features of the human character. They not only blight the happiness of mankind but completely degrade the character of those who are under their influence. Evil genius destroys what love creates. An early youth, passed in the company of the most beautiful girls of Brindaban, made Sri Krishna strong against beauty's powerful glance. Wisdom does not necessarily accompany old age, if it does not achieve an understanding of the changing times. Man's failure through his own appetites of flesh and blood, in the guise of beautiful Eve tasting the fruit of the forbidden tree, was the cause of the transgression of divine love and the fall from paradise to earth.

The married girls of Brindaban realised by their early lessons from Sri Krishna that they should not waste their lives as slaves of passion. They wanted to taste divine love. The Srimadbhagabata described how divine love was being developed with the beauties of Nature in the light of the full moon and how they were feeling the absence of their great man who first sowed the seeds of divine love in them. They realised that the great God who was the husband of divine Nature was the real husband of the women of the World and could enlighten their

heads and hearts to realise Him and love Him, resplendent with divine love and glory. Sri Krishna was the emblem of divine love and he preached and practised in the beautiful island of Dwarka with so many as over sixteen thousand married girls. This cannot but be an exaggeration. He was not mad for a kingdom or children, but he was the father of Cupid, the God of Love. He was not drawn to women but they were mad about him. What Siva and Brahma failed to achieve in this World! Women were the great instruments of Gods to lead astray great sages and powerful Asuras and to work out their ruin. This might be the poetic imaginations of the later age of the Puranas but it conveyed undoubtedly the tendency of the age.

The great lesson of self-control was given to Arjuna and the family of the Pandavas, in the great water spot of the beautiful Khandavaprastha after the opening ceremony of Indraprastha by Sri Krishna. The sister of Sri Krishna, Subhadra, was there as well as other ladies. It showed the most advanced stage of Hindu society and civilisation. In divine love innocence is bliss. The Dove is a representation of it. Sri Krishna was said to be in love with Radha, a name not to be found in any authoritative book of religion. It is, no doubt, an imaginary picture of an age when the habit of castle building in the air developed. She was said to be the tutoress of Sri Krishna and his devoted lover. The Mahabharata does not know her nor does the Harivansa. The great Epic's task seems to have been quite different. Its aim and object has been to imprint the virtue of a man and a woman in the services of humanity, so that their trials and sufferings naturally illuminate the world with the light of Heaven to guide them to do their duties with strength and energy in order to ensure success. Sri Krishna and the Pandavas were such male characters and Draupadi and Subhadra, with their mothers-in-law, Kunti and Gandhari, were the female characters who adorned the Mahabharata. There God was not given out as Sri Krishna in supersession of Narayana. Sri Krishna was a follower of Narayana. This was illustrated in the name of his famous army. God is reflected in the vast universe everywhere but He is seldom realised and seen by ordinary men. This is the greatest miracle imaginable and the miscalculation of human beings is Maya. Maya is called the shadow of Hindu philosophy for the obvious reason that it covers the eyes of the world. Men and women are daily engaged in a game of blindman's buff, as it were, by the influence

of Maya. Sri Krishna came to disillusion the world. A poet sang :—

" In each virtue found a pleasing cell,
Thy mind was honour, and thy soul divine;
With thee did every God of genius dwell
Thou wast the Helicon of all the nine."

Chatterton.

In Hindu mythology death at the hand of God is but another name for emancipation. Death carries men and women to the places of reward in Heaven and of punishment in Hell. Death is the greatest miracle of religion, transforming God into man, men to beast and reptile, etc., and *vice versa.* Yama or Pluto presides over the destiny of mankind on the day of judgment after death. This theory of enjoyment and suffering due to one's actions cannot but be a sort of bondage of the soul to repeated devolution or evolution as the fruit of actions. The most execrable despots who disgraced the names of God and man were held up in the great Epic to the everlasting abhorrence of mankind. The spirit of esteem and admiration towards individuals whose lives were exemplifications of virtue, was conspicuous in it. It must have been a happy World which it depicted. One can then reflect with the profoundest admiration and just adoration upon the character of that Great Being from whom all these proceeded and who conceived them. The five elements of Hindu philosophy teem with delighted existence. The Supreme Being has given all kinds of pleasure, more than necessary to the support of man's life. There one finds the benevolence of creation and its creator. Such a creator, descended on earth in the person of the man Sri Krishna, was the theme of the Mahabharata at its later stage. In the western world Socrates was held to be the wisest and best individual, and he was a gross idolator. God is a spirit, if he be everywhere. The Hindu philosophy believes in the spirit of God and ascribes the creation to Maya. If miracles cease, marvels will continue in this world. The scenes of Nature are often converted into the temples of God by the devotion of mankind to the great creator, and it was for this reason that Maya is described as the shade and shelter of God divine. A passionate desire and unwearied will can easily accomplish marvellous things. Such is the power of man's will that a miracle can easily be accomplished by the spirit of God within this Universe. God is not the teacher of mankind or a ruler of the earth. He is not interested in the destruction or

construction of the World only; his divine will pervades all throughout. The most important question arises in this. The soul of man is very hard to find. Mind is the master of the body. But how is the soul of a man roused? When mind is blind with passions and enjoyments of all kinds, the soul cannot be at work. This is the work of Maya. "Know thyself" is a well-known maxim, but tyrants are disregarding it and consider themselves the great masters of the Universe. Jarasandha was aspiring to be such an Emperor of India. But the sage Narada and Sri Krishna wanted to found an empire of justice and universal love. For that they came to Yudhisthira and called upon him to perform the great sacrifice of Rajasuya. Sri Krishna was the great maker of Kings and Emperors of India. He did not ascend the throne himself, which if he liked he could easily have done. He wanted to place on the throne of India, as an ideal Emperor, such a man of whom not even his worst enemies and oppressors could find an evil word to say. There comes a time in the course of events when the lives of individuals as well as those of Kings are suddenly changed by the love and inspiration of a great man, as great as God himself. Sri Krishna was not a man who was born to think, like ordinary man, that everything in the World was made for his enjoyment. Yudhisthira asked Sri Krishna why he did not kill Jarasandha and was asking him to do so. One can read his answer by his conduct of life. Revenge is an admission that one is hurt, but a great mind, which makes a true estimate of its value, cannot be insulted. There can be no greater proof of his sense of propriety than that nothing which befalls him will be able to move him to anger. This is the great miracle of resignation of a great mind over action. If Nature hurled the thunder on the head of a tyrant, then God's mercy and benevolence would have been questioned. The beauty of the appearance of Nemesis depends on the action of the very tyrant. The question of reward and punishment is not in the hands of God above but depends upon the actions of each individual from his birth, enjoyments, misery and death. The religion of the dark age is converted into the theory of bribing Gods. If a God is propitiated he will undo the fruits of past generations, will bless one with boon of happiness and kingdom. Ravana, Kartabiryarjuna, etc., were such monarchs. The Pandavas and Sri Krishna proved just the contrary. Jarasandha wanted to become an Emperor of India and he was going to offer the heads of a hundred reigning Kings of India in a sacrifice to the great

God Siva. The result was a confederacy of the eighty-six imprisoned Kings of India with the Pandavas under the leadership of Sri Krishna, to remove the wicked tyrant and save their lives and Kingdoms from his thraldom. Sri Krishna was thus looked upon as the great liberator of the age. Sri Krishna was the man who conceived the whole plan of action to remove the great and powerful Jarasandha without much carnage and bloodshed. All the armies of these great Kings surrounded the capital of Jarasandha in disguise as if they were going to see the great sacrifice; many went as attendants of the relatives who went to bid adieu—to the imprisoned Kings. In this way the King did not scent anything wrong. The two most powerful Pandavas brothers, Bhima and Arjuna, accompanied Sri Krishna in disguise as beggar Brahmans, much respected in those days for their religious fervour. Sri Krishna did not easily get the permission of Yudhisthira until he was told how he would succeed in killing the most powerful Hansa and Dimbaka, on whose strength Jarasandha relied materially. The deaths of Hansa and Dimbaka by suicide and the false report of the killing of the one by Balarama followed one after the other like a miracle. It illustrated the great work of Maya or illusion. The close friendship between them was so great that, when one heard by false report that his friend was killed by Balarama, he did not care to ascertain the truth of such an assertion, but drowned himself in the Jamuna out of grief. The other followed suit in the same manner when he heard that his friend had given up his life for him.

But Jarasandha was killed after a fight of 14 days; Bhima entered his palace secretly in disguise where there was no option left but to fight. Evil omens appeared before his death and to propitiate the Gods he was observing some vow; his end came as a deathblow to all these false religious functions. The imprisoned Kings were released and their men, who carried out the plan of Sri Krishna successfully, fell flat at the feet of the great Sri Krishna, as the deliverer of their lives and Kingdoms. They were invited to help in the performance of Yudhisthira's Rajasuya sacrifice. The son of Jarasandha was quite taken aback and, after the funeral ceremonies of his dead father, had to submit to Sri Krishna who installed him on his father's throne. Sri Krishna bade adieu to them all and was presented with many valuable presents. He, with Bhima and Arjuna, went to Indraprastha in an aeroplane of Indra which the family of King Uparichara

Basuhoma got from Indra. The defeat and death of Jarasandha and the release of the imprisoned Kings of India shall ever remain in the history of the world as one of the greatest feats of Sri Krishna, a marvel of achievement. No one ever dreamt that so great and powerful a monarch as Jarasandha would be killed by the clever scheme for the seizing of the capital and by the skill of one throw in the wrestling match between Bhima and Jarasandha. Sri Krishna's name and fame spread all over India like wild fire.

Nakul was married to Karenumati, the Princess of the Chedi King, and Sahadeba to Bhanumati, Princess of the Yadu dynasty.* Arjuna fought in rescuing the girl from the hands of an Asura who was forcibly carrying her away. The Pandavas and the Yadus were bound closely by matrimonial ties. The son of Sri Krishna, Samba, went to the Swayamvara Ceremony of Durjodhana's daughter, Lakshannah, and wanted to marry her by force but he was defeated and imprisoned. Balarama went and released him and the marriage ceremony of Samba was celebrated. Sri Krishna's son was thus united to Durjodhana's daughter by matrimonial tie. Balarama became the instructor of Durjodhana in the use of the club, as well as in wrestling.†

Suffice it to say, that no man except Sri Krishna was so very famous and beloved in India for he was always busy moving and never at leisure. If the details of his life were studied it would be found that the energy of his soul took him into every branch of public service, wherever and whenever exigencies of circumstances demanded it. He is even now remembered as the spirit of God above, who consolidated India under the régime of the Pandavas. He proved to the World that the power of Royalty did not rest on the edge of a sword, nor did the combination of ambitious Kings. What high souls must prize most is divine love and religion. Marriage was not a question of "Thou has given thy daughter to another. I kill the father or the brother to regain the prize on which I set my heart." A steady deterioration was going on at that time till at last the nation found a single individual, Sri Krishna, in whom it was possible to interest themselves and who belonged in spirit to them and was their saviour in every respect.

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* Harivansa.
† Harivansa.

CHAPTER XIV.

The Rajasuya Sacrifice.

Vyasa presented historical characters who lived for ages, and few men understood better than he what characters of men and women would be the idols of nations before and after the original undertaking of the great work. He knew the need for depicting a conception of life which would provide strength to generations to face and conquer the miseries and cruelties of life in this world. He furnished youth with an ideal, heroic conception of the ancient chivalry of kings and of their religious, moral and spiritual temperament, queens of virtue and majesty of love, ministers of wisdom and patriotism, sages of great and wonderful intellectual and spiritual understanding, and people alive to their duties, in his wonderful book of religion and history, the Mahabharata. He was the greatest teacher of the age.

New problems arose with the foundation of Indraprastha in India. The land had been reclaimed and peopled. Agriculture and art carried on under the new system had to be introduced all over India, and for this an exhibition of great importance was necessary. A religious sacrifice under the Sama Veda, of great political importance, was decided upon. Sri Krishna first invited the eighty-six released Kings and Princes at Giribraja, the capital of Jarasandha, to show their gratitude by making the sacrifice a grand success. They laboured hard with all the resources at their command to make the sacrifice worthy of the great King Yudhisthira, who was to be declared Emperor of India in place of the wicked Jarasandha.

The friends and admirers of Jarasandha however were hatching a plot, and decided to put it into effect at the great sacrifice of Rajasuya. Sisupala became their leader. Sri Krishna, learning of it, warned Yudhisthira by illustrating the five qualities necessary for a King who wanted to become the Emperor of India.

In the great sacrifice Vyasa officiated as Brahma, superintendent of religious ceremonies; Yajnavalkya,



THE ROYAL PROCESSION TO RAJASUYA SACRIFICE.

Adhyarja, Paila and Dhaumya as Hotas; Sosama became the chanter of the Sama Hymns; and their sons and disciples, all competent and well versed in the Vedas, became Hatragas.

The Kuru Court, with the King and his children and their families and ministers, were provided with the best palaces and every arrangement was made for their comfort. They were entrusted with important posts of trust. Vidura was Minister of the Exchequer and under him Durjodhana received the tributes and was Treasurer. His brother Dushasana was superintendent of food and drink. Aswathama was in charge of the comforts of the Brahmans, Kripa was appointed to take charge of gems and valuables and became the distributor of fees to the Brahman performers of the sacrifice. Narada, the divine minstrel, honoured the great sacrifice with his presence.

The formalities of the great sacrifice were being performed when the question of precedence was raised, and then the trouble began. Bhisma was called upon to decide the question, and he declared that Sri Krishna was undoubtedly the foremost of all the Kshatriyas present there by virtue of his unparalleled intelligence, valour and wisdom. But when Sahadeva approached Sri Krishna to offer the tribute of honour, Sisupala, the powerful Chedi King, took Bhisma severely to task, and Yudhisthira also, for having given his consent. He proceeded to abuse even Sri Krishna. He took his stand on the Hindu Institutes and contended that Bhisma was a mere flatterer of Sri Krishna. He questioned the assembly as to how the claims of Drupada, Drona, Kripa, Vyasa, &c., could be overlooked. If Krishna, as the Ritwaja, was entitled to the honour, Vyasa was better in every respect. Should a man who had unrighteously killed a great King, Jarasandha, be honoured in this fashion? Sisupala left the assembly in great wrath followed by many Kings. The virtuous Yudhisthira went to them and tried to convince them that they were wrong, but his efforts proved abortive. Yudhisthira and Bhisma then enlightened the assembly as to why no one among the Kshatriyas could supersede Sri Krishna's claim to the place of honour, in consideration of his unequalled fame, heroism and success. Amongst Kshatriyas the question of seniority was not merely a question of age; with the Brahmans it was a matter of learning and wisdom, with Vaisyas of wealth, and age would be taken into account only with the Sudras. Besides, Sri Krishna was

well versed in the knowledge of the Vedas and Vedangas. Who was there whom one could point out as being more distinguished than Sri Krishna?

The divine minstrel shouted:—"Amen, Amen," and Sahadeva offered the great Arghya to Sri Krishna, saying proudly that he would set his foot upon those who disapproved of the decision.

Sisupala, as leader of the wicked Kings, loudly belittled the deeds of Sri Krishna and cried shame upon his ingratitude in killing Kangsa, with whose food and drink he was living in the womb of his mother. Bhima leapt up from his seat in a great rage, but Bhisma held him in his mighty arms.

Sisupala cried: "Let him come to be destroyed like an insect in the mouth of a fire."

Bhima replied: "Well, Sisupala, did you not hear that you brayed like an ass when you came out from your mother's womb; and you apparently have not forgotten it yet with your advanced age, bordering upon death."

While these hot words were being exchanged Sri Krishna sat as still as a statue, but when the vain Sisupala challenged Sri Krishna to fight with him, the latter rose and removed poor Sisupala's head by one stroke of his discus, the great weapon Sri Krishna used. Death stopped the mouth of the braggart. Every one of his followers learnt the great lesson and spoke not a word again. Everything passed off without any further hitch.

The great poet Vyasa demonstrated that the link between the body and the mind is in the soul of humanity, and it is not emancipated so long as it is under the influence of body and mind solely. The death of Sisupala figuratively illustrates this. Great models in times of emergency appear in this world for good and evil and they are the leaders of men in society. This is the law of Nature over which no one has any control.

"The tumult and the shouting dies,
The Captains and the Kings depart:
Still stands thine ancient sacrifice,
An humble and contrite heart
Lord God of Hosts, be with us yet,
Lest we forget—lest we forget!"

Rudyard Kipling.

This Lord God of Hosts of the great sacrifice of Rajasuya was Sri Krishna. He was remembered in the sacred halleluiahs

of the great sacrifice of Yudhisthira at Indraprastha. The followers of Sisupala were made motionless statues, as it were, with despair.

Yudhisthira established his claim to be declared an Emperor of India first by removing a tyrant like Jarasandha from the throne. He was not ungrateful before he was installed on the throne, for he acknowledged openly that he owed everything to the good advice of Sri Krishna and he, and nobody else, could deserve the great place of honour in the great sacrifice. The ode of victory of justice over tyranny was sung in the great sacrifice, and another tyrant follower of Jarasandha followed him as he protested. The great Rajasuya Yajna was a religious sacrifice of very great importance where a King was selected by the Kings of India assembled, who would be called upon to uphold the glory of a nation as a whole and be a fitting example to posterity. His virtue and religion would not be a mockery of forms and formalities, like the peacock's dancing with unfurled plumage after the thunder and lightning in the rainy seasons.

The hand of divine love removed the heretic Sisupala from the great assembly of Kings, as sacrifice is the emblem of Faith, of Religion and Truth. The tributes of flesh, corn or prepared food in honour of Gods of the spiritual world, offered in the mouth of Fire for the prosperity of a nation by the hoary-headed learned sages, represent the progress of civilisation and happiness. In ancient India it was the bounden duty of good kings to support the great preachers of religion and truth, and patronise performers of Vedic sacrifices who were teachers of the Vedic religion, so that they would never be in want of the bare necessities of life and existence but would be able to support the learners at their homes. The religious instruction and spiritual advancement of a country and a nation largely depended upon the distribution of wealth by kings to maintain these educational institutions of India in the states they controlled.

In the horse sacrifice of Vasudeva, the father of Sri Krishna, Sisupala with Durjodhana and other kings put obstacles in the way of the performance thereof, and the Pandavas stood by the Yadavas to make it a success; so it was only fair that Sri Krishna should have stood by the Pandavas in their Rajasuya sacrifice. The Rajasuya sacrifice was not spoken well of in the Ramayana and Rama Chandra did not perform it. The Harivansa, the sequel of the Mahabharata, gives out that the King

Janmejoya after hearing the Mahabharata, in answer to the questions he had put in the snake sacrifice to Vaisampayana, at the time of his horse sacrifice, held the Rajasuya sacrifice to be the real cause of the great battle of Kurukshettra. He cited instances in favour of his finding—that Kings Soma, Varuna and Harish Chandra suffered after performing the sacrifice of Rajasuya. He asked Vyasa why he did not prevent it and Vyasa replied that no one could do anything against destiny. Yudhisthira admitted it in the Vana Parvan of the Mahabharata that the Rajasuya sacrifice was the cause of the future struggle.

The Rajasuya sacrifice afforded all kinds of food and drink, with all sorts of enjoyments, to all classes of men, women and children in the Royal Court and outside. The great enemies of the Pandavas were subjugated before the great sacrifice by Bhima, Arjuna and Sri Krishna. The opposing leader Sisupala, the veritable Satan of the Age, was hurled headlong down to perdition and with him went his followers, the Kuru Court of Hastinapur. The old places where sacrifices used to be held before were not selected, and the great Vyasa christened the famous capital of the Pandavas "Indraprastha." The divine minstrel Narada described the beauties of Heaven to Yudhisthira and called upon him to perform the Rajasuya sacrifice at the request of his dead father Pandu, then in Heaven. Something almost like anarchy crept into society during the regency of King Dhritarastra; so what was best suited for a nation and country like India was an Emperor. The important sacrifice of Rajasuya solved the great problems of nation building and brought about great reforms in the best interests of all concerned, irrespective of caste, creed and colour. Kings and princes of India were not the only people who participated in it; the great mass of the general public also did so. Opinions are not often formed by reason but by mimicry, for the human propensity for imitation may be called one of the strongest forces of nature. These are the strong points in the so many distinct and minor distinctions and differences of manners, customs and religion in India. Patronage of favoured forms of manners and customs against the open persecution of disliked ones is the main cause of changes in the national character. It was for this purpose the great kings and princes were invited with all the great sages of the time to exchange views on important subjects like religion, law, order, customs, manners, philosophy and politics.

Some attractive types caught the eyes of the assembled men and what they approved of was finally adopted by all. Every predominant mind calls out a corresponding sentiment in a country.

Sanguine people talked loudly and the mass caught the contagion of their tone and voice. A little while afterwards when people were tired of talking this or that, something untoward happened to silence their voices for all time this actually happened after the death of Sisupala. In a Rajasuya sacrifice the wealth of Indra flowed into the Imperial Treasury of the Pandavas at Indraprastha, like the rivers falling into the Ocean.

The great sage Agastya was said to have been doing wonders in India and the Mahabharata related the fact. He introduced flesh eating by the story of Batapi and his brother being digested by him and by his swallowing the Ocean. The true implication of this swallowing of the Ocean seems to have been to stop all the rivers falling into the sea, for agricultural purposes. The Greeks copied Indian wit, and it was related in Grecian literature that seven wise men of Greece had been invited by a barbarian King's Ambassador and he asked them to explain the meaning of the saying "drinking the sea." One of them said it was quite possible if all the rivers were stopped from falling into the sea. The fall of Jarasandha and Sisupala made the world believe that the Pandavas had a strain of divine blood in their veins—Sri Krishna was then hailed as the great God of Gods.

The Mahabharata could not describe properly what the Srimad-Bhagavata had said about the misconduct of Durjodhana at the great sacrifice of Rajasuya. The wicked Durjodhana could not bear to think of the great prosperity of the Pandavas at the Rajasuya sacrifice. He could not bear the sight of Draupadi being appointed the Empress of India or the Emperor of India, Yudhisthira, receiving attentions from his beloved spouse. Nor could he stand the great encomiums showered upon them on all sides in the vast assembly. He and his brothers abused them. Durjodhana and his brothers were the victims of the art of deception practised by the great artist Moya in the great durbar reception hall. They tumbled upon a false door and fell into the water, hurting their heads; they were victims of the art of deception practised by the great artist Moya in the great assembly. These were incidents which amused the assembled kings of India in spite of the warning given to the wicked Durjodhana and his brothers about the true state of things by the Pandavas and their men, specially placed for the purpose. Nature made them incapable of putting up with all these

practical jokes which they took seriously to heart as purposely meant for them. Yudhisthira warned the whole assembly not to crack jokes with them but in vain. He realised their bad effect. Durjodhana's brain reeled in agony and his anger knew no bounds. He beat a precipitate retreat to Hastinapur with his brothers. The dissatisfied kings were invited by them to follow them there.

Sri Krishna took leave of his aunt Kunti and other family members of the Pandavas, to whom he was attached by ties of relationship and friendship, and went to Dwarka, after being worshipped in right royal fashion in the great assembly of Kings. The general body of men dispersed with their leaders and Kings whom they had followed there. The friends and enemies of the Kurus and the Pandavas formed two parties who began to multiply after the great sacrifice according to their inclinations and culture.

The old King Dhritarastra's partition of paternal properties was mocked at in the Rajasuya sacrifice. The building of Indraprastha and the performance of the Rajasuya sacrifice entailed great labour and predatory excursions before the actual ceremony. The Pandavas, related by their marriage connections with the powerful kings of India, celebrated the great sacrifice of Rajasuya under the advice of Sri Krishna. The excursions of Arjuna in the forest and his marriage with the beautiful Princess Ulupi, the daughter of the King of the Nagas, and with Chitrangada, the daughter of the King of Manipur, are tales of romance. The beautiful sister of Sri Krishna, Subhadra, excited the love of Arjuna, who carried her off and married her. The other Pandavas were similarly married to many princesses of India. The Kings of Panchalas, of the Andhakas and the Vrishnis did not pay any tribute at the Rajasuya sacrifice of Yudhisthira. Various princes from all parts of India attended the ceremony and took active part in it and gave rich presents. Sri Krishna bathed Yudhisthira with the water supplied by the King of Avanti from the big Conch of Varuna. The King of Chedi held the flagstaff, Satyaki, the umbrella, Dhananjoya and Bhima fanned him, Nakula and Sahadeva waved two excellent fly-beaters (Chamars), Ekalavya stood with the shoes, Chekitan with the quiver, the King of Benares with the bow, Salya with a sword with a gilt hilt and inlaid straps: these formed the great show of the installation ceremony. The learned sages with the son of Jamadagni approached the Emperor Yudhisthira, uttering Vedic incantations, while Dhaumya, Devala, Vyasa and Narada performed

the annointing ceremony by sprinkling the sacred water over the Emperor. The old King Dhritarastra and his ministers were not consulted about the performance of the Rajasuya sacrifice. The Rajasuya ceremony throws great light on the geographical divisions and political situation of India at that time. The story of Sisupala and his destruction by Sri Krishna before the assembly of Kings formed the subject matter of the celebrated poem of Magha. The Vishnu Purana identifies Sisupala with the demon Hiranyakasipu and Ravana in his previous lives. Durjodhana imbibed the scepticism of Sisupala in regard to the divine nature of Sri Krishna.

Draupadi used to superintend personally the daily arrangement for the distribution of food and drink to everyone; even the deformed were not excluded. The Rajasuya sacrifice used to be undertaken when material changes had to be introduced in the administration of social, civil, political and religious matters. It was a question of dignity and of great political and spiritual advance against all forms of degradation. Yudhisthira introduced the reforms not by precepts but by his own example before the performance of the great Rajasuya sacrifice, and he was called a successful Emperor of India.

The rise of the Pandavas forms a touching episode of the original Mahabharata of Vyasa. The Pandavas and all the people of Indraprastha lived happily under the rule of Yudhisthira.

PART TWO—DRAMA.

PART TWO—DRAMA.

CHAPTER I.

The Bharata and the Mahabharata.

India is even now called Bharatavarsa from the name of the King who ruled it, and Hindusthan as the abode of the Hindus, and last but not least, Aryavarta as the home of the Aryas. The great Bharata, from whom India received the name Bharatavarsa, was the son of King Rishava. The Rig Veda recorded the triumphant marches of the victors from over the river who carried with them their own God and Goddess, Agni and Bharati (Saraswati). The appellation Bharatarsabha (leader of the Bharatas) was given to Viswamitra. The contest between Vasistha and Viswamitra is well known in history and mythology. Pururava's name Aila occurs in the Rig Veda, and the formation of the name Ilavarta, together with Brahmavarta and Aryavarta, is ancient.

The Bharata Samhita was based on the Rig Veda according to the information imparted by the illustrious Vyasa to his son Suka.* What Manu Samhita was to the general body of the Hindus the Bharata Samhita was to the Bharata Kings of yore. The Mahabharata was developed from the Bharati Katha; this is a well recognised fact. The three lawgivers of India found to be honoured were Vasistha, Parasara and Vyasa; and Bhrigu was the expounder of the laws of Manu who was well known as a teacher of the sciences of ethics and politics. The Manu-Brihaspati discourse in the Mahabharata† differs from that in the Institutes of Manu current at that time. The commentator of the Institutes of Manu says that Manu is the name of Agni (Fire God) or of Prajapati, and that he was the preceptor of Brihaspati. Brihaspati's descendant, Bharadvaja, was a disciple of Bhrigu, and Bhrigu's descendant was Valmiki. This is all to be found in the Mahabharata and the Ramayana. Brihaspati and Sukra were respectively the priests of the two contending parties, the Devas and the Asuras. Brihaspati and his brother Sambarta were recognised law-givers of the Hindus. Vasistha also officiated as priest of the Devas. These sages

*Shanti Parvan.

† Shanti Parvan, Chap. CCI.

wielded great influence and power in shaping the destiny of their disciples. The Bharata Princes and Kings and their priests used to intermarry amongst themselves and were connected either in friendship or rivalry. The Bharatas were respected; and such interrelations and intermarriages became the order of those days. King Marutta married his daughter to his priest Samvarta. King Yajati married the daughter of Sukra, Devajani, and also the daughter of the Asura King Brisaparba, Sarmistha. There were two dynasties in India, the Solar and Lunar, and in each dynasty there was a King by the name of Bharata. The one Bharata of the Solar dynasty was the brother of the great King Rama Chandra who became an exile at the instance of Kaikeyi, the mother of Bharata. The other was the son of King Dushyanta and Sakuntala, the daughter of Viswamitra. The love story of Dushyanta and Sakuntala was dramatised by Kalidasa, the greatest poet of India, and is admired by western savants as one of the world's masterpieces. This King Bharata had three wives and nine sons who were found to be quite unfit to succeed him on the Imperial throne of India. He performed many sacrifices and was rewarded with the idea of adopting Vitatha or Vidathina, son of Bharadvaja, as his successor. Takshya, son of Bharata of the Solar dynasty, founded the capital Taxila (Takshyashila) which was later invaded and conquered by King Janmejoya, and where the snake sacrifice, mentioned in the beginning of the Mahabharata, was said to have been started. The old Bharata Samhita, no longer extant, was developed in the nineteen Samhitas of the Hindus in the progress of time. It was also a manual of religious sacrifices.

The two well-known Indian Epics, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, belong not only to the two different dynasties of Solar and Lunar but to different epochs, Treta and the end of Dvapar. All tribes of India and their great Kings traced their descent from the Bharata Kings and worshipped the God Narayana and the Goddess Saraswati. The Vedic rituals contained the germs of drama, and an inspired sage—the great inventor of Indian drama—was blessed with the name of Bharata. The word "Bharata" signifies an actor.

The great creator Brahma is said to have blessed the authors of the two Epics of India and the Mahabharata* was pronounced the greater of the two. The domestic life was held to be the best of all the four stages (Asramas) of life†; and the

* Adi Parvan, Chap. I, Verse 61.
† Adi Parvan, Chap. I, Verse 73.

Mahabharata dwells more on the subject of domestic and family affairs than the purer epic form of the Ramayana. There were many beginnings and revisions of the book. Vyasa originally described the evil conduct of the sons of Dhritarastra, the goodness of the Pandavas with the greatness of the Kuru race, the wisdom of Vidura, the virtue of Gandhari and the constancy of Kunti, ending with the divinity of Sri Krishna. All this seems to be in keeping with the crowning of Yudhisthira at the Rajasuya sacrifice where Sri Krishna was worshipped as the greatest of all mortals and as equal to God. That the work underwent revision is quite clearly seen from verses 107 and 108 of the table of contents. Yudhisthira was the great tree of virtue and religion, Arjuna its trunk, Bhima its branch and Madri's twin sons Nakula and Sahadeva were the fruit and flower, whereas Durjodhana was represented as a tree of passion, Karna its trunk, Sakuni its branch, Dushasana and others its fruit and flowers. The roots of the great trees of virtue and vice were the great Sri Krishna with the Brahmanas and old blind Dhritarastra respectively. The great generals, Bhisma and Drona, were not mentioned and only the name of Karna was given; and there were different sections of war exploits with their individual names. In Souti's version only the name of Bhisma occurs (V. 94) and it is said that the work of Bharata was not published by Vyasa until after Dhritarastra had died. Bhisma, Drona, Kripa and Vidura forbade the gambling match; their warnings were not heeded by the Kurus; and the war was the inevitable result (Vs. 137—139). A holy Upanishad was composed showing how great and virtuous Kings went to Heaven after duly performing their duties, but they could still be overcome by any kind of bereavement, especially that of their beloved children (V. 250). When the Bharata received the name of Mahabharata it was amplified from the sacred Puranas (V. 270). It was then that the Mahabharata, like the Ramayana, was remodelled with the dramatic and Pouranic admixture. It was in the time of Kings Janmejoya and Satanika and not before. The author, Vyasa, was given an everlasting lease of life so that everything could be done in his name.

The Ramayana was divided into two parts. One ends with the death of Ravana and the accession of Bibhisana to the throne and the other ends with the death and disappearance of the King Rama Chandra and his brothers. The same applies to the Mahabharata. The original Mahabharata of Vyasa ends with the Rajasuya Sacrifice of Yudhisthira and the killing of

Sisupala by Sri Krishna. The great heretic of the age was removed by the recognised Emperor of India, Yudhisthira, in the company of all the Kings there, to end the dispute over the worship of Sri Krishna.

The drama of Ramayana was composed by its author, Valmiki, as a song of praise to Rama Chandra, to be sung in his presence at the great horse sacrifice by his own sons who were there recognised by the King. Sita went to heaven, relieved of her duty now that her sons were accepted, in a great Durbar before all, by her husband who was now at the pinnacle of his fame.

Yajnavalkya is said to have been the one who has tampered with the works of Vaisampayana in the Mahabharata;*. and the Puranas were employed for that purpose. Yajnavalkya distinguished himself from others by his worship of Saraswati, the Goddess of Learning and primeval spirit resident within the Sun. But he also perceived that there is a Creator under whose laws the Sun, Moon and Stars come and disappear during fixed hours and seasons perform their respective duties to make earth fruitful. He was said to have received his lessons from this God and Goddess by Yoga practices; and thus did he undo the work of his maternal uncle Vaisampayana.

The authorship of this dramatic Mahabharata after the Pouranic fashion, so far as it can be gathered from the texts of the Mahabharata, may be ascribed to Yajnavalkya, a disciple of Vyasa and a performer of sacrifices of the Pandavas and the high priest of Janaka, King of Mithila. The sacrifice of King Janaka was made after the White Yajus in direct violation of the Black Yajus; and in it Vaisampayana was openly denounced. The dramatic Mahabharata was conceived by Yajnavalkya and was taught by him to the Pouranic students mentioned in the Mahabharata. Yajnavalkya was a nephew of Vaisampayana and was his pupil, but fell out with him. He was a Yogi of great merit who, having disgorged the Black Yajus, became the exponent of the White Yajus by the worship of the Sun and Saraswati. The Mahabharata of Vaisampayana was written according to the Black Yajurveda. The two sacrifices of Rajasuya and Asvamedha by the Pandavas were probably performed according to the Black and White Yajurveda respectively. Yajnavalkaya's revision of the Mahabharata is patent from the Anukramanika (or table of contents) and from the Astika Parvan where references to Karsana Veda (Krishna and Svetha Yajurveda) were indirectly made in the

*Shanti Parvan.

colours of the horse's tail (which was the cause of friction between the contending parties). The horse is represented as the sacrifice and Vishnu is represented in the Hayagriva form.

The Ramayana and the Mahabharata flowed like the great rivers of India and their currents never slackened. Every day they are even now being read and their story travels from house to house and village to village; they are equally respected in the grocer's shop and in the palaces of kings. Time has caused the disappearance of the names of the actual authors from the minds of men, but the reciters were honoured with the title of Vyasa. Their recitations and revisions were made, to a great extent, to suit the tastes of men and women of different times.

Vyasa and Yajnavalkya were law-givers; Vaisampayana was not so. The laws of Yajnavalkya are still prevalent, and in the North-Western Provinces the question of inheritance is decided according to them; but the laws of Vyasa are not so—they are more or less dead letters. The laws of his father, Parasara, are said to be authoritative in the Kali age. The tree of virtue referred to in the table of contents is alluded to in the Yajnavalkya Samhita.* It is very difficult to make out how many revisions of the original Mahabharata of Vyasa and the dramatic Mahabharata of Yajnavalkya have taken place since the time of the two well-known Kings, Janmejoya and Satanika. The worship of Sri Krishna as a God omnipotent was introduced with great dramatic art in the dice-play. The Samkha Samhita (Chapter VII, Verses 20-21) mentions Vasudeva Sri Krishna, as Vishnu Dhata† and Bidhati, who is Mahapurusha, who is to be worshipped in order to achieve the state of emancipation. He is not easily discernible by men addicted to worldly affairs.

Yajnavalkya had fifteen disciples who were all called Vajins or disciples of the White Yajus. Vaisampayana made eighty-six Samhitas; and he finally discarded Yajnavalkya, who was his nephew. The disciples of Vaisampayana and of the Black Yajus were called Taittiriyas, amongst whom the most prominent were Syamayani, Asuri and Alambi. Asuri seems to be the teacher of Pancasikha,‡ who is referred to in the Mahabharata. The Taittiriya, as well as the Sathapatha and Gopatha Brahmanas and the Jaiminiya, refers to the united Kuru-Panchalas. All have great religious and political signi-

*Chapter III, Verse 186.

† Shanti Parvan.

‡ Dasaratha.

ficance in the great battle of Kurukshettra. Jajali and Saunaka were the disciples of Sumantu, and were the compilers of the Samhitas that went to make up the Atharva Veda. They were referred to in the Mahabharata. In the Anusasana Parvan the gift of a cow is praised above all. In the Atharva Veda (hymn X. 10) the cow is praised and worshipped and likewise is the ox (hymn IV. 2). The ode of Sri Krishna refers to the cow; and Brahmana refers to it in the Mahabharata. The Atharva Veda is closely connected with the warrior caste, and the law-book of Manu says clearly in XI. 33 :—" Word is the weapon of the Brahmana; he may kill his enemies with it."

The Indian Epics demonstrate that the four gates of Hell are hunting, gambling, drinking and woman. The Ramayana describes the evils of hunting and envy of Kaikeyi in the story of the death of Dasaratha; and how, with the abduction of a faithful queen, Ravana met his doom. The Mahabharata shows that a gambling match and the failure to redeem a pledge of restoring the Empire to the good Yudhisthira caused the ruin of the Kurus; and that drinking caused dissension amongst the Yadavas. Later the Ramayana was imitated and in the revision of the Mahabharata it was stated that Pandu's death was due not only to the curse but to hunting and his connection with the woman Madri. Draupadi, like Sita, was carried away by Jayadratha while the Pandavas were absent. The prologues of the two Epics being quite different, any revision of the Mahabharata made on the lines of the Ramayana makes the interpolation very clear.

The Ramayana is more or less a heroic poem showing the great brotherly love and devotion of Bharata and Lakshman, as well as the destruction of Ravana for driving his good brother, Bibhisana, out of his kingdom, the power of the faithfulness of a loving wife Sita and the sacrifice of a King's* life for the sake of truth; but the Mahabharata relates to the affairs of greater India. Its eighteen sections or Parvans relate to the different aspects and relations of the old Aryan family of kings, priests, merchants, trade guilds and peasants of India in Hindu society as a whole. The four orders of the ancient caste system of India can trace their origins to this ancient epic. The Ramayana deals with Brahmanism to a greater extent than the Mahabharata on the whole. To emphasise the real significance of the plot embodied in the Mahabharata, it was found necessary to provide a short sketch of the gradual development of Hindu society as it then existed. The first

* Ancient Sanskrit Literature, P. 231.

Parvan or section describes the educational institutions in India where the boys were taught; and from them the Kings obtained their priests, paying the fees of the students. Religious instruction formed the special feature there. The observations of King Sudasa (Pousya) to Utamka are significant. The Brahmins were ungrateful to the King for his benefactions to them. The usurpation of the priesthood by the Kshatriya King Visvamitra and his fight with Vasistha was a prominent development; Sakti, the son of Vasistha and grandfather of Vyasa, was killed. The sacrifice, intended by Parasara to avenge this wrong, was not carried into effect owing to the intervention of the benevolent sages. Utamka worshipped Nagas, Siva, and Indra, and subsequently he was converted into a Vaisnava by Sri Krishna, according to the Asvamedha Parvan. This points to the theme which is foremost from the first Parvan to the last. After this introduction the prologue is found in the story of Supratika and Vibhabasu, two brothers degraded to animal lives owing to their mutual animosity. The fight did not end in the next life even, for Garuda, the great powerful attendant of Vishnu which carried him on its back, took possession of them; but then they came to their senses and sought refuge in the great God Narayana, the shelter of mankind, who rescued their souls from their earthly prisons in the bodies of animals. It is evident, from this, what was the chief aim and object of the great epic and the nature of its plot. It was nothing but the emancipation of the soul.

The ancient Indians and their great sages the authors of the Indian epics, did not live only in the realm of ideals. They presented to the world, with illustrations from the actual lives of great men, the central principle of true Hinduism. This principle has been self-realisation through great sacrifice. "To die is to live"—this has been the ethical maxim and message of the immortal Vyasa to his son in the essence of the great epic:—

"Thousands follow Nature, come and die
Parents, wives, children, relations dear and near;
Daily occasions arise, alternate laugh and cry;
The wise mind it not, nor moved with joy or care,
For Virtue is eternal just as thy soul is,
Sacrifice it not for the transient joys;
Be not greedy for your pleasures of senses;
From Virtue proceeds wealth, joy and happiness."

Professor Max Müller said that Saunaka, the great author of the Kalpasutras, was the chief of the sages in the Naimisheya

forest, and he heard the Mahabharata together with the tale of the Harivansa from Ugrasravas, son of Romaharsana and teacher of King Satanika, son of King Janmejoya. The great sage Saunaka and King Satanika introduced the laws of Vishnu as the only means by which worshippers would be brought to the heaven of spiritual emancipation.* Dr. Berridale Keith says:

"The drama owes in part its origin to the epics of India."†

"The early drama, it seems clear, was not secular in origin and Professor Levi emphasises its dependence on the cult of Krishna."

"The religious origin of the Sanskrit drama in Krishna worship is also admitted in part."‡

"Definite support for this view of the origin of the drama may be found in the accounts of dramatic performances which are given in the Harivansa, the supplement of the Mahabharata."§

"Professor Oldenberg admits in fact the great importance of the epic on the development of drama, but it may be more accurate to say that without epic recitation there would and could have been no drama at all."||

"The term Bharata, which is an appellation of the comedian, attests doubtless to the connexion of the rhapsodist with the growth of the drama."

"The Bharatas must be the rhapsodists of the Bharata tribe whose fame is great in the early history of India."

It will appear from the views of the great western scholars who have studied the subject closely that the dramatic revisions of the great epic were made by the rhapsodists from time to time. The cult of Krishna was beautifully put in the Bhagabata Gita. Sanjaya says¶: "O King Dhritarastra! I listened to the secret and supreme Yoga philosophy from its great expounder Sri Krishna speaking to the great-souled Arjuna by the favour of Vyasa. I rejoice again and again remembering the marvellous dialogue and the most marvellous form of Hari. Victory, prosperity and happiness are there assured wherever is Sri Krishna, the great Yogi, wherever is the great archer Arjuna!" The Bhagabata Gita did not escape the dramatic infection. The great expounder of that philosophy

* The Sanskrit Drama, p. 75.
† Ibid, p. 46.
‡ Ibid, p. 47.
§ Ibid, p. 27.
|| Ibid, p. 30.
¶ The Bhagabata Gita, Chapter XVIII, Verses 74—78.

of Divine Love—the blissful union of the soul of God with that of the worshipper—had to admonish the vacillating Arjuna:—

"Do you not let your enemies laugh at you, casting all sorts of slander on your vaunted strength? What is more painful than that? Dishonour is more painful to him who is highly esteemed by all. Men will recount thy perpetual dishonour for casting away thy duty and honour. Why shouldst thou tremble in a righteous war? There is nothing more welcome to a Kshatriya than to be engaged in a war to defend the honour, prestige and religion of his mother-country. O Arjuna! stand up firmly resolute to fight the great battle for thou shalt win it, and enjoy the earth and, even if thou failest, thou wilt go to heaven. Thou shalt not incur any sin. Throw off this fear. Do not be guided by any thought of gain or loss, victory or defeat. Awake, arise, gird-up thy loins and fight in right earnest!"* This does not fit in with what is said in the Bharata Savitri shortly before this:

The Blessed Lord (Sri Krishna) said:—"O Arjuna! The wise would not grieve either for the living or for the dead. Your uttered words seemed to be wise but they were not really so since you were grieving for those that should not be taken into account by you if you were really wise."† And: "O Bharata! Beings are as unmanifest in their origin as they are in their dissolution. What is the ground for your lamentation only for the manifest midmost state of existence or for the death which is inevitable to all creatures that are born?"‡

The Bharati Katha was recited in the snake sacrifice of King Janmejoya by Vaisampayana.§ The Mahabharata was prepared at Janmejoya's instance answering all the doubtful questions which arose after hearing the short account. It took considerable time to prepare; and was recited at the horse sacrifice of King Janmejoya.‖ The King ascertained the cause of the great war of Kurukshettra to be the performance of the Rajasuya Sacrifice. The King gave instances of the great fights after the performances of that sacrifice by Soma, Varuna and Harish Chandra.¶ Vyasa, who was asked why he could not avert the great evil, said in reply that he tried his level best but failed.

The Rajasuya Sacrifice was denounced in the Uttarakanda

* Gita, Chapter II, Verses 31–38.
† Chapter II, Verse 11.
‡ Gita, Chapter II, Verses 27–28.
§ Adi Parvan, Chapter LX.
‖ Harivansa.
¶ Adi Parvan, Chapter XCIX, Verse 48.

Ramayana by the brother of King Rama Chandra and so snake sacrifice was abandoned. Yet it was said that when the Kings were not submissive to the would-be Emperor then the Rajasuya sacrifice used to be carried out. The dramatic Mahabharata began after the great Rajasuya sacrifice. It was not a part of Vyasa's Bharati Katha or the Mahàbharata which related to the deeds of the great King of the Bharatas.* The Bharatas, it is said in Tandiya Brahmana (X. V5), will always have a Vasistha as Purohita (priest). The commentator of it observes that Bharata may either mean the Kings of that name or men in general. Kanva, in whose cottage Sakuntala, the mother of King Bharata, was brought up, and Kasyapa were the great priests who officiated in the many sacrifices of King Bharata. Yaja Kasyapa officiated in King Drupada's sacrifice for the births of Dhristadyumna, Sikhandi and Draupadi. Devala's younger brother, Dhaumya, the priest of the Pandavas, who officiated at Draupadi's marriage, was a Kasyapa. It was Vyasa who suggested that the Pandavas might make him their priest. The peculiarity of the great Vasistha was that he excluded meat from the sacrifices he performed, and the name Vasistha was enshrined in letters of gold in the Mahabharata because he introduced the sacrifice of corn at the great sacrifice of King Uparichara Basuhoma of Magadha, with an account of which the Mahabharata begins.† King Santanu's son, Bhisma, played the most important part in the dramatic Mahabharata. He came into great prominence at the Rajasuya sacrifice and thereafter.

In no other country but India have personal matters and family affairs become the subject matter of epic poems. This not only helps men to understand the poet himself, but it helps them to understand what India was like then. One can very well understand the real significance of a family life and of household duties to Indians in those days. It proves how lofty was the Indian ideal of a family life. Family life was then not meant for anyone's personal pleasure or happiness but it was extolled as a sacred duty which was to be a reality and not a fictitious ideal. It may be called the foundation of ancient Aryan Civilisation in India. The conception of the Mahabharata is grander than that of the Ramayana—it is not confined to one single hero and heroine like Rama and Sita.

The ceremony of Rajasuya was the consecration of an

* Adi Parvan, Chapter I, Verse 52.
† Adi Parvan, Chapter I, Verses 272—275.

Emperor of India, lasting as it did then for over a year. The Rajasuya sacrifice was performed by Yudhisthira. It was undertaken at a time when many material changes in the administration of religious, social and civil matters were involved. If Yudhisthira could not carry out the reforms that he had introduced by his own efforts then he would not be called a successful Emperor of India. It was a question both of dignity and of a great political, moral and spiritual advance against all forms of degradation. One of the great results of Yudhisthira's Rajasuya sacrifice was an epoch-making fight between the old and new constitutions of India, the latter inaugurated by him, according to the philosophy and religion of love embodied in the worship of Sri Krishna. It created an opportunity for unjust invectives and artificial apologies from both parties; and a state of affairs in which each party was interested in any disaster to, or dissolution of, government. Upon the proper working of the new constitution depended the truth of the new hypothesis. The liberal party was for the unity of all different sects and creeds in one strong body under an Emperor and under one God of Universal love, Sri Krishna. The realisation of this ideal unity must have taken time and the pace could not be forced at a time when any action was likely to be misinterpreted. The real fight between the Kurus and the Pandavas was a question of the law of inheritance. A person can acquire a right by virtue of his birth and cannot be deprived of it through any disability or incompetence. This is a question which is always greatly agitating society. A person can acquire power and live luxuriously without necessarily doing anything worthy of his occupation of a throne or of a great position in life; but instead, he can indulge in all of the sports and vices of his age. It is neither good for the youths who were bred and brought up with this idea nor good for their country. The great Pandavas were set up as examples in order to expose this demoralisation of royal families in ancient India. They naturally created great enemies amongst those royal families who stood against them. Here was the origin of the two political royal parties of ancient India, liberals and conservatives. Nothing was more dangerous in the political life of ancient India than undue reliance upon good technical defences of conduct, because they were open to substantial censure. Vidura pressed the Kurus to march with the times and become liberals; but in vain. This was the cause of their fall; and the blunders which the Kuru Court made proved fatal to its cause. The conservatives were selfish worshippers of

Mammon who wanted only power and pleasure. They would repress the poor to achieve this and would give no thought to any kind of liberal treatment towards their subjects, their subordinate vassal kings, the chiefs of their State, or even their own relatives.

"He that is proud eats up himself: pride is his own
Glass, his own trumpet, his own chronicle and whatever
Praise itself but in the deed, devours the deed in praise.
Troilus and Cressida Act II, Sc. II.—*Shakespeare.*

The Mahabharata of later growth represents greater India with her teeming millions governed by kings with chiefs at the head of separate provinces and an Emperor at their head. It was a living force in determining the activities and ideals of a great nation, in moulding its character and in encouraging action for the common good. The Emperor used to be declared by the assembly of Kings and great sages in a great assembly of people from all over India at the performance of the religious sacrifice of Rajasuya. The nation annointed its Emperor, the accredited leader of kings and the people of greater India. The Empire and Emperor then represented the united India and the growth of a nation which was always eager to sacrifice everything for the sake of the motherland and its people. This was confirmed in the Asvamedha sacrifice. For these reasons the Mahabharata was the accredited organ and history of the great nation and of the great Bharata Kings; and it was held to be of greater importance than the four Vedas put together.*

* The Mbh. Adi Parvan, Chapter I, Verse 269.

CHAPTER II.

The Dramatic Prologue.

"Life every man holds dear: but the dear man
Holds honour far more precious dear than life."
—*Shakespeare.*
Troilus and Cressida, Act V, Sc. III.

The poet of the dramatic Mahabharata had made full use of his great powers of imagination rather than present a strict account of the actual facts and incidents of the lives of the principal characters, semi-divine or human. The name of the great sage Vyasa was used to deliver due warning to the anointed Emperor Yudhisthira of any impending catastrophe. Joy and grief are, no doubt, reflected in the incidents arising from the pursuit of virtue by an idealist Emperor of India who, by self-control, fought indomitably against the sensual pleasures so very natural in times of prosperity and affluence. Yudhisthira published his solemn declaration of peace and happiness to all. He would not use a harsh word nor would he do anything which might lead to future dissension. The office of Emperor of India represented a great ideal in those days. Bharata was an Emperor who set the great example of making the mothers sacrifice their children for public good when it was found that they were unworthy of occupying the throne of India. To follow such an example in the case of Durjodhana was the repeated request of the good minister, Vidura; from the time of Durjodhana's birth evil signs were seen and ominous sounds were uttered by the child; but the old Dhritarastra would not listen to this good advice. The necessity of stating the previous births of the *dramatis personae* was imperative and it was given out in the beginning of the Sambhava Parvan. Biprachitti and Hiranyakasipu were Jarasandha and Sisupala respectively. Durjodhana was an incarnation of Kali or the Dark Age and his brothers were the sons of Pulastya; Bhisma was one of the Vasus; Vidura and Yudhisthira represented Virtue; Draupadi and Kunti represented Sachi (wife of Indra, King of the Gods) and Sidhi and so forth. Gods, Asuras and kings were worshipped by the people as great examples of the three qualities Satya, Raja and Tama.

This drama of the success and failure of great men and women, princes and sages proved the widespread nature of the belief that everything depends on the fruit of one's actions and that, from this, even the Gods cannot escape. The births of the illustrious Vyasa, Vasistha and Narada were awe-inspiring and mysterious and they were subject to the state of illusion (or Maya). Vyasa, Parasara and King Santanu were the subject of much ridicule for their connection with Satyavati. The boon of Siva was exposed in the marriage of Draupadi. The good advice of the old King Dhritarastra was disregarded by Durjodhana with unfortunate results. This seems to have been the burden of the prologue of the dramatic Mahabharata*.

Vyasa was the godfather of Dhritarastra, Pandu and Vidura; and Vasistha was godfather to the son of King Sudasa and to Madayanti who killed Vasistha's son Sakti, the father of Parasurama. In this instance the question of revenge was not preached or practised; but for the most part the dramatic epic is full of revenge and curses. The Poulama and Astika Parvans of the Mahabharata testify to this; they have been called in the table of contents the roots† of the work, and the Asvamedha Parvan its immortal sap. Jaimini, a disciple of Vyasa, wrote a Mahabharata, which was unlike Vaisampayana's Bharati Katha, and describing the Asvamedha only. The reasons that prompted Yudhisthira to perform the horse sacrifice after the Rajasuya sacrifice completes the prologue of the dramatic Mahabharata.

The domestic happiness of human beings is dependent on peace of mind and culture, and not on the great possession of wealth or of a great Empire. The love stories of Pururava and Urvasi, Yajati and Devajani among the Kings, and of Bhrigu and Pulama, Ruru and Pramadbara are not to be missed. The worship of Fire by animal flesh was given up; and fire was more used for the clearing of jungles and the cooking of food than for sacrifices and daily religious duties. The story of Sahasrapada is indicative of this. He read a lecture to Ruru on the duties of a Brahman—mercy and forgiveness; aversion to the slaughter of animals is the highest virtue; domestic happiness depends on the true use of fire—as an article of every-day utility. The position of the Fire God in mythology is interesting. Agni (Fire God) is identified with Siva. Siva was the deity of the material world. In the marriage ceremony Siva was asked to lead the bride to the bridegroom and make them prosperous.

* Shanti Parvan, Chapter CXXIV.
† Adi Parvan, Chapter I, Verse 88.

He is called, jointly with Soma, the great progenitor of Heaven and Earth and thus is explained his close connection with the marriage ceremony of the Hindus. The favourite attendant of Siva was the sacred Bull (Nandi) symbolized in the phallic emblem. Siva was said to be the guardian of cattle and was also known as Pasupati and Pushan. In the Satapatha Brahmana Agni, Indra, Vayu and Surya were mentioned and their representatives are said to be Dhristadyumna, Arjuna, Bhima and Karna. The curse that Bhrigu laid upon Siva and the Himalayas made his son-in-law, Vishnu, come to earth as ten Avatars; and the emblem of Bhrigu's feet is on the breast of Vishnu. Indra was said to have been the elder brother of Vishnu to him the great evil of sensual gallantry (Jara) was ascribed by his illicit connection with Ahalya, wife of Goutama. Yama, the great dispenser of justice, was brought to his senses by sage Animandaba for inflicting on him a heavy punishment for the trivial offence of hurting an insect. He was cursed by the sage and came down to earth as Vidura; and Yudhisthira was said to occupy the throne of justice on earth. Vidura was the great friend of the persecuted and the minister of the blind regent Dhritarastra. Pandu was the great King who recovered the lost prestige of the Kurus and advanced their name and fame; and these deeds entitled him to found a line under his name.

The dramas of the world are enacted in the Indian epics showing how the possession of power can be abused to further false notions of love, truth, religion and philosophy. The wicked forgot the existence of God and forsook the moral and spiritual forces of virtue and religion. "The use of might and of deceptive skill were the principal means whereby they propelled themselves along the royal road to success in life." The victory of Garuda in the fight with Indra, after which that monster became the attendant of God Vishnu and was glorified with the name of Suparna,* cannot be overlooked. Upamanyu and Utamka introduced the worship of Indra, Siva and Aswini Kumars which vanished before the appearance of Vishnu. Vasistha and his descendant Vyasa were the fathers of the Vaisnava cult which developed into the Krishna cult. Krishna flourished when the heretical tendency of defying orthodox Brahmanism was prominent and his work was for the benefit of mankind in general. The doctrine of the Trinity and the theory of incarnation culminated in the beatitude of salvation. It was the religious war waged in the great battlefield of Kurukshetra

* Pagiter's Ancient Historical Tradition, page 68.

which made the peaceful thinkers eager, on the one hand, to take the edge off dogmatical rancour and, on the other, to check the vigorous growth of the Epicurean thought of Charvaka which provoked distrust of the common basis of the well-known Hindu philosophies of Sankhya, Yoga and Vedanta. The Indian epics were meant to give a tone to Hindu religion and society. The aspects of the national life and the forms of worship could not and would not remain the same for ever.

The administration of King Dhritarastra rendered the Kurus idle, extravagant, vain and viciously indulgent. They were offended with the excellence of the Pandavas. The perfections of their fellow creatures were odious. What a wretched state of mind was this! The condition of envious men is the most deplorable; they hatch plots to injure pious men and their assembly would do credit to pandemonium where Satan held his court. The Kuru Court was a veritable den of Satan. The orders of the King were questioned and his wisdom not respected by the young princes, with Durjodhana at their head. The acknowledged wisdom of Vidura commanded no respect from them. Their great might and foul deception were more honoured and revered than anything else. There was no discipline of any kind and conscience was blurred. Acts of virtue did not ripen into habit as did the pursuit of selfish ends and of deception. The world seemed to Dhritarastra a toy-house of his own! He thought that he could do whatever he liked and therein lay his true blindness! The ever-merciful God provided him with a minister in Vidura who had been the leading light. As long as the King would listen to his good advice, the administration of the State prospered, he was happy and dutiful; but when he disregarded it, he was lost in misery and sin. At last the plot against the Pandavas was hatched in the Kuru Court where the followers of Sisupala were being entertained by the wicked Durjodhana. What a terrible thing human passion is in this world! What a great gulf there is between this and true love! Dhritarastra, poor blind man, who was deprived almost at birth of his father's throne and got it back only through the goodness of his brother Pandu, could not resist the great temptation of securing the same for his son by cruel schemes for the destruction of the Lac House in which the Pandavas were dwelling; and again he had called upon them to reclaim the fearful forest of Khandavaprastha. But alas! These plots miserably failed, and yet that perverse man was thinking of again attempting to ruin them.

Here Satan did not appear through a woman's love but through foolish affection for a son. It was that affection and love for Durjodhana which made Dhritarastra forget every principle of human conduct; and he yielded to the impulse of human passion. From that fatal instant the higher conception of love and duty left him completely. That love for his son seemed to him the highest conceivable good in human life and existence. There is no other name for it but sin. He was not in the habit of being guided by reason in his past life; far from it now. He braved the opinion of the World in the Lac House plot and in the unjust partition, and now he was going to take a further step. The life that is guided by reason and conscience had not become a second nature with him and did not prove an insuperable barrier to the performance of wrong and deceit.

The prosperity of the Pandavas at the Rajasuya sacrifice preyed very heavily upon the Kurus; and they decided upon a plan in which their success would be instantaneous and sure. The passing of the body and the passions ought to teach man that his happiness depends very much on spiritual life rather than on material existence. God has made it clear to men and women daily in the deaths of hundreds before their eyes, and especially in their own bereavements, yet they cannot realise it. This is the effect of Maya. The true aim of the great dramatic epic had been to prove this graphically from the actions of the Kurus and the Pandavas. The physiognomy and physiology of earthly and divine are portrayed in Heaven and Hell by the actions and training of men and women in this world. God did not make them so, nor did fate decree it to be so.

There is the well-known passage "Thine eyes shall see the King in His beauty." Here the beauty of stainless, moral holiness is clearly referred to. The great poet showed that stainless, moral holiness dwells in spotless physical beauty and in the practice of discipline. There the body and the soul were shown to be developing together harmoniously and by means of each other. The scourge of the Almighty falls on the vicious and the bliss of Heaven falls to the lot of the good. Yama (Pluto) is the great punisher of the wicked and dispenser of rewards for good and bad deeds. He released Satyabana from the clutches of death to reward his exemplary wife Savitri. Pluto respected the earthly relationship of marriage and laws of chastity. He rewarded Savitri not only with the life of her husband but also restored the lost Kingdom of her father-in-law,

as well as his lost sight and a hundred sons to make the family prosperous. Gandhari was an ideal wife to the old blind King Dhritarastra; she was the mother of a hundred sons and it was her asceticism that prompted Pandu to declare Dhritarastra regent of his young children and King in his place; but in her case her husband's eyes were not recovered, though her sons by unfair means got the Kingdom. The virtue of the good Gandhari was active but not beneficient to the World at large. Her sons were all very wicked. The influence of the Dark Age was the reason given for this. It could not be overlooked that the sons of Dhritarastra were the fruits of a boon to Gandhari given by Siva, the God of Destruction. As it happened they were nearly the agents of destruction to the great line of King Kuru whose throne they ascended and whose name they adopted by foul means. The dramatic marriage of Draupadi was the subject matter of discussion and decision in the Kuru Court and the fine exposition of this famous marriage was given by the old King Dhritarastra. It was a bolt from the blue to Durjodhana and his friends.

The seed of the great war seemed to have been sown in the proud conduct of Yudhisthira in not accepting the boon of King Dhritarastra but in going to the forest to practise Yoga for twelve years, and there he was acknowledged as the Emperor of India and as the religious head by the great saints and recluses who never leave their hermitages in the forest. The forest life of the Pandavas forms one of the most beautiful sections of the dramatic Mahabharata; these life-dramas played important parts in the making of greater India and in the religious upheavals and social advances that were to follow. The Pandavas revived the Agnihotra system of worship which had fallen into disuse with the passing of time and through the cruel ravages of the foresters. Many savages and wild men were civilised and trained by them, becoming the best trained soldiers and defenders of the country.

The earliest political event in India of very great importance was the emergency of the idea of Imperialism, found in the sacrifices of Rajasuya and Asvamedha of ancient Hindu civilisation. Both these great religious ceremonies were performed by Yudhisthira. The Asvamedha sacrifice, as described in the Asvamedha Parvan, may be said to be the culmination of the incidents of the great war; and it portrays the strong sense of righteousness alive in those days. The cost of the war had left Yudhisthira poor and he openly pleaded poverty when he was

advised by the Brahmanas to perform the great horse sacrifice, approved of by Sri Krishna. It was Vyasa who found the wealth for him in the treasure-trove of King Marutta left in the mountains. Sri Krishna retired to Dwarka after passing some time with the Pandavas during the great religious ceremony (horse sacrifice) as an honoured guest and relation. His discourses with Yudhisthira, Arjuna and Utamka were of great importance. He related the events of the great war as an eye-witness to his father and gave out the causes of its successful conclusion.

It would have been detrimental to the character and purpose of the epics if their heroes had been Gods and not men. The first dramatic poet, Valmiki, asked the celestial sage Narada pertinent questions concerning the qualities of a hero for his great poem and the reply was as follows:—"Listen to me about Rama who had got all the qualities of a true hero in a drama, an example of which cannot be found even amongst the Gods. He was the man whom the Goddess Lakshmi upheld with her strong support." Men and women, by dint of their energies, culture and practice of self-control and virtue, became Gods and Goddesses. The root of religion is in human feelings and not in the systems of dry and barren rulings of the divines. Theology is based on the comparative test of human knowledge and culture. Religion was presented as the great crown of virtue and the depth of divine love. The great characters of the Indian Epics were not imaginary. The royal sage, Pandu, with his wives retired to the forest to practise Yoga and to train their souls to make union with the soul of God who would bless them with sons; these sons became the great heroes of the Mahabharata.

The picture of Yudhisthira set at rest the spirit of his forefather Nahusa, ascending and descending from heaven. The dramatic Mahabharata describes the fall from heaven of the King Mahavisa with the water nymph Ganga for the birth of Bhisma who was called Debabrata. Filial piety of different types was represented in Puru, Rama, Bhisma and Sri Krishna. Sri Krishna was descended from Yadu, the eldest son of Yajati, who was disinherited of his father's throne for disobedience and impudence. The infant Sri Krishna was worshipped as Gopal (God the Son), but Sri Krishna was represented in the dramatic Mahabharata as God the Father and the Holy Ghost as well. The table of contents refers to the composition of a philosophical poem by Sanjaya to relieve the sorrow of the bereaved

Dhritarastra after the great war of Kurukshettra. It is apparently the Bhagabata Gita in the Bhisma Parvan.

Bhisma was a dramatic character of very great importance as the lifelong exponent of Brahmacharya and as a fighter who could destroy hundreds of men in the battle-field and, what is more, as a reciter of the Mahabharata and expounder of the two sections of it—the Shanti and Anusasana Parvans. The glories of the vanquished generals of the Kurus survive in the war sections (Parvans) of the dramatic Mahabharata; and the great discourse between Sri Krishna and Arjuna survives in the Bhagabata Gita. This was foisted on the epic to show that the great war was won by Sri Krishna, God the Father and the Holy Ghost, and not by Arjuna or by anyone else. Arjuna was made to appear as a coward in the battle-field. This is indeed amazing. The conception of the dramatic Mahabharata begins with the effects of the Rajasuya sacrifice and ends with the Asvamedha sacrifice.* The seeds of discontent and envy began to grow in the heart of Durjodhana on seeing the great prosperity of Yudhisthira at the Rajasuya sacrifice where the divine Sri Krishna was worshipped. Durjodhana considered that strength derived from the possession of wealth and empire was more powerful than the righteousness, the force of morality and spirit of heaven upon which Yudhisthira safely relied.

A struggle about religion had been waged between the Devas and the Asuras from time immemorial, as recited in the ancient Vedas and Puranas. The struggle between the Kurus and the Pandavas was waged on similar grounds and was rightly described as the fight for righteousness. Sri Krishna was identified as the guide-philosopher and hero of the chivalrous age, who ascended the throne of God. Bhisma, who was the guiding star of the other side, was mocked with the boon of dying at his own will, which in plainer language means nothing less than committing suicide. This he did, as a penance for his wrongly partaking in the war in support of an unjust cause, after the lifelong practice of Brahmacharya. He was at last converted, and went over to the other side before his death. All sorts of good lessons on good Government with expositions on philosophical and didactic subjects were preached by him to the Emperor Yudhisthira. Bhisma first came into great prominence with the marriages of his father and brothers. His spirit of high sacrifice and self-control entitled him to be called Debabrata as well as Bhisma. Amba, one of the disappointed

* Shanti Parvan.

daughters of the King of Benares, practised Yoga to kill Bhisma for the great wrong that he did in preventing her from choosing her own husband, whom she cherished in her heart.

Self-indulgence, wrath and greed are the very gates of hell. Demoniacal-natured men exult in all sorts of gratifications of their senses. Hypocrisy, conceit and arrogance are the ornaments of wicked characters, whereas purity, vigour, forgiveness, fortitude and freedom from envy and pride are seen in divine characters. Demons surrendered themselves to insatiable desires, harbouring evil designs and engaging themselves in impious actions with great resolution. They strove to obtain hoards of wealth and the property of others by unlawful means for sensual enjoyments. They fell into a foul hell, led to it by their great ambition, enmeshed, as they were, in a web of self-delusion and egoism. Sri Krishna said that the Pandavas were the Devas in the Bhagabata Gita.*

> " O Pandavas! Grieve not, as you are born with divine origin and possess all the properties of Devas."

This was the prologue of the dramatic Mahabharata, which ended in the great fight of Kurukshettra on the holy plain, consecrated by that great progenitor, Kuru, long before.

There was a time when ancient sages ruled India, killed King Vena and put his infant son on the throne; there was a time when the unknown warriors like Bhisma, Drona and Kripa were the makers of Kings in India; but with the advent of Sri Krishna and the Pandavas things changed materially. The great Hindu religion was established on a firm footing. The true divine love was embellished in the great exploits of Sri Krishna—the Holy Ghost brought to life the child of Abhimanyu and Sri Krishna became his godfather and baptised him with the name of Parikshita, after he had been freed from the evil effect of the curse of Asvathama. Sri Krishna combined in himself the western idea of the Trinity of God—God the Son (in Gopal), God the Father (in Parikshit's birth) and God the Holy Ghost (in his universal love on Parikshit's death). Yudhisthira was not an Alexander or Charlemagne, but a just and righteous Emperor who practised and preached divine love and showed its great relationship to the universal love which an Emperor was called upon to practise in the true sense of the word. Such an Emperor never dies even if his body and his Empire disappear. The real test of immortality lies in the stamp of a man's deeds and the footprints he leaves behind in the moral

* Chapter XVI, Verse 5.

and spiritual spheres; such examples the preachers of religion utilise to make a nation worthy of its great heritage. A man and a woman ascended the thrones of India and became perfect ideals of an Emperor and Empress, worthy because they had withstood all sorts of trials, persecutions and privations in life and not because they were descendants of a well-known line of Kings. It was for this reason that the Pandavas and the Kurus, though descended from the same line of the Lunar dynasty, were distinguished with different names. The Mahabharata begins with Janmejoya, the successor of King Parikshita who wanted to avenge the killing of his father at Takshyashila; but the Srimad Bhagabata Gita begins with the devotion of Sri Krishna, God of Universal Love, who set at naught the curse of an irate young Brahman. What a glorious result of Sri Krishna's great work is the change in the conception of God in his Avataras to moral and spiritual manifestations in special ways and by appropriate means! The Holy Ghost is truly reflected there! How like an angel in action! How like a God in apprehension! How express and amiable in form and moving! How noble in reason, the beauty of the world!

The illustrious Vyasa presented to the world the ideal Emperor and Empress in Yudhisthira and Draupadi, and Sri Krishna was the immaculate guide and torch-bearer of the Divine Light of love which shone forth with radiance in all his spheres of action. His great attainments were crowned with signal success, attended with joy and glory universal! The last message of the Pandavas before they retired to the blissful regions of Heaven seemed to have been:—

"If to love is the best of all things known,
We have gained the best in the world, mine own.
We have touch'd the summit of love—and live—
And God Himself has no more to give!"

They were not the great models in the showroom of a tailor or great stage actors who could fit in with any characters of a drama, receiving popular applause and attracting the admiration of the general public. The illustrious Vyasa could alone present them to the world and they were not ordinary human beings to be judged by their standards. Their entire conception was moulded with such harmony of character as to interest the imaginations of all ages. It has been the peculiarities of the great authors to ascribe a sort of divinity to their great heroes and heroines. Drama was not simply to produce art for the sake of art and enjoyment, but to leave some lasting religious

impressions on the mind of the audience. It is the poets who wear the crowns of immortality when they describe Heaven and Hell, the great panorama of the fairyland, the delicately pictured scenes of unending pleasure and enjoyment against the fearful wailings and sufferings of Hell where great despondency mark the staring faces waiting for eternal justice on the day of judgment!

God made man after His own image—quite fit to grasp the prize of immortality—and the great poets and dramatists of the world were immortalised who sung the praises of such men. All religions of the world try to find out the soul and, through its medium, hold communion with the master spirit of God. Soul is the infant of Heaven, endowed with free will. The sight, sense and touch of the human organs are meant for peace and goodwill, but when they are corrupted the fall from Heaven takes place. It is an easy thing to ruin a simple girl in the nursery bed of corruption; likewise is it with the soul.

The affectations of love in the vows of constancy made by lovers is the great illusion or Maya. What a world of love was there at the time of creation! It is very hard to depict on the dead paper with mere pen and ink of imagination! Ganesh, a son of Siva and Parvati, with the head of an elephant, was found competent to do so, but even he was found to be confused by the true meanings of the love-knots which the illustrious Vyasa presented in the Mahabharata. The love episodes between Pururava and Urvasi, Yajati and Bisvachi were used to serve as lessons of the sad experiences of a sensual life for the guidance of a future generation; and to show that human happiness does not depend on the pleasures of the senses after all. The great value of birth lies in the lessons taught by the self-sacrificing love of parents. The birth of a son releases the parents from the sufferings of Hell. The great true love of the Creator, the Almighty Father, is permeated through the self-sacrificing love and devotion of parents. How did they learn the self-sacrificing love as the chief glory of their existence? How is the fall from Heaven also the means of regaining it?

Human feeling comes of being lonely and weary. The lack of it robs human beings of all the dearest joys of life. Besides, it is natural that a man and a woman at a certain age of life should long for companionship and for love. Nature has a way of marking her specimens; and she is called the Mother of Creation. Trees, plants, rivers and mountains are created for wider purposes than for supplying the birds, beasts and human

beings with the necessities of life. Thus ordinary men and women who presume to think and act for selfish ends are always great dangers to the human community, society and country to which they belong. A country, ruled by an autocrat who legalises a wrong done to the innocent and powerless people, is condemned unfit for human habitation. Human and social feeling strikes then at the root of the selfish enjoyments which tell severely upon the personal liberties of men and women. Life and property could not be safe and secure without it. In ancient India a just ruler to punish the wrong-doers was a necessity, as well as good law to guide the administration of a country and a nation. The divine sage existed as much to help the King as a wise minister, in the due discharge of his duties, as to preserve the religion. The lawgiver and religious preachers were at the head of religion which must co-operate with the administrators of the country, the King and his minister. The great task of building a nation was in their hands. The good citizens were the pillars of the State, as without their wholehearted co-operation nothing could be done.

The people of India were united when the country was ruled by an Emperor like Yudhisthira. The mighty monarch of Magadha, Jarasandha, was found tyrannical and incompetent and so he was removed by Sri Krishna through the might of Bhima. What Bhisma was to the Kurus, Bhima was to the Pandavas so far as skill and might of arms were concerned. The solar and lunar dynasties of Kings were joined by marriage ties by Vasistha and Visvamitra. The very name of Visvamitra signifies the friend of the world. The Yadavas, the Panchalas and the Matsyas, etc., were united with the Pandavas by marriage ties. Thus the rivalries of long standing amongst Kings of different provinces were converted into strong friendship and union. All tribes of Rajputs in India claim their descent from the Bharata Kings of those days.

The Rajasuya sacrifice is found to be connected with Pitriyana worship; for the celestial Narada saw Yudhisthira at Indraprastha and delivered the message from his father, Pandu, who was in Heaven, to perform the Rajasuya sacrifice, like King Harish Chandra, for the peace of the departed soul. The great Indian poet, Magha, became famous by his Sisupalbadha which ends with the Rajasuya sacrifice, ascribing divinity to Sri Krishna. The universal love of Sri Krishna is the special attribute of God, Who selected and anointed the just Emperor

Yudhisthira to occupy the throne of India at the Rajasuya sacrifice by removing the head of the revolutionary Sisupala.

Sri Krishna was the shepherd of Brindaban, where he first conceived the great idea of federation between the Brahmanas, the Kshatriyas and the Vaisyas. Sri Krishna was born in the family of a Kshatriya but was brought up in the house of the Vaisya King Nanda. The Kurus were not extinct, for Yujutsu, a son of Dhritarastra by a Vaisya queen, survived and he fought against the Kurus; Yudhistira made him sit on the throne when he was engaged in the performance of his horse sacrifice. Sri Krishna is saluted as the great benefactor of the Brahmanas and of the universe, as well as of kine.* The Pandavas acquired great spiritual knowledge and exercised its power in rescuing a wealth of cows from the Kurus who wrongfully wanted to possess it by their strength of arms. The Bhagabata Gita is a discourse on Yoga philosophy between Arjuna and Sri Krishna, and there it is said that all the Kuru generals were killed by Sri Krishna in the field of battle and it remained for Arjuna to become the great victor by the sham use of arms. It actually happened in the great battle-field in the Kingdom of Virata, when the great generals with the Kurus were slain on the field and Arjuna rescued the cows from them. There Yudhisthira showed to the world that he could no longer remain idle, but he had to exercise all his power to help the weak and to extricate himself and his property from the clutches of the wicked aggressors. The Yoga philosophy deals with Devayana worship. The World is an illusion which appears and disappears by the will power of God, the Creator. The Empire created by the energies and power of the Pandavas with the advice of Sri Krishna disappeared in the game of dice and was recovered by the Yoga power of the Pandavas which they learnt and practised in the wood under the great sages of their time. In the field of Kurukshettra Sri Krishna was Hari, who enlightened the great victor Arjuna with the great discourse on Yoga philosophy and prompted him to fight against the celestial weapons of the degenerate Brahmana generals like Drona, Kripa and Asvathama. The true significance of the word "Hari" is said in the Mahabharata to be as follows:—†"Hari effectually cures all worldly attachments and is the panacea and great means to overcome sorrow and grief in the brief sojourn in the wilderness of life on earth." This is the essence of the

* Shanti Parvan, Chapter XLVIII, Verse 94.
† Shanti Parvan, Chapter XLVIII, Verse 95.

Hari Gita referred to in the Mahabharata. Human salvation lies in the divine cult of Sri Krishna, preached in the Srimad Bhagabata Gita and included in the Mahabharata; but it must have been put in the wrong place by the dramatic reviser. The great Vyasa, the Pandavas, Bhisma and Vidura were the followers of Hari who received the distinction of being called the Bhagavatas. The Bharatas were converted into the Bhagavatas and the Srimad Bhagavata Puran is more revered than the Mahabharata, dealing, as it does, thoroughly and properly with the divine cult of Sri Krishna.*

God is recognised by the religious and wise men but the mass accept Him with a doubt. Many of them prefer to stake their chances on Destiny instead of worshipping an unproved and merely an imaginary identity of God. The enervating sensualism of a trained and cultured epicurean aristocrat laughed at all creeds and all morality and followed each after his own wicked propensities in the city of pleasure. Local popularity is not fame. A King is known as a showy profligate even though, because of his stalwart martial bearing and a certain surface good nature, he has managed to conceal his vices from the eyes of his subjects whom he has misled. Each man or woman is endowed with a Free Will which determines individual fate. What is the use of genius in a human being if it cannot be used to control his senses and the course of his life? What is the worth of his fame if it does not serve as a bright incentive and set a noble example to others? What sort of a man is he who is merciless, selfish and utterly regardless of the woes of others?

* "The Vedas are expounded by the aid of history and Purana." Verse 264. Adi Parvan, Chapter I, Mbh.

CHAPTER III.

The Royal Court of Hastinapur.

Thousands of years before the Christian era the dramatic Mahabharata was conceived; as a sequel to the great military, political, social and religious events, the Rajasuya sacrifice, performed at the new capital of Yudhisthira at Indraprastha, had a tale to tell of what had taken place at the old capital of Hastinapur, the seat of the Kuru Kings. The rise of the Cult of Sri Krishna left an indelible mark upon the history of India. The Tree and Serpent worshippers of India disappeared in the great sacrifice of King Janmejoya, the son of King Parikshita, the successor of Yudhisthira; whose glory was sung with sincere admiration as a devout follower of that cult in the Srimad Bhagabata Gita. The objects of the material world were made to attract the human hearts wherever they could be afforded; they were used only to enhance the great qualities of an Emperor like Yudhisthira at his installation ceremony at Indraprastha. That show and pomp gave rise to a desire in Durjodhana's heart to do something at the Kuru Court of Hastinapur which would prove to be a source of great wonder and universal attraction. It is the diffident men that like to achieve sudden fame as heroes by some remarkable deed, rather than by the sustained brilliancy and dignity of their Courts. Many were the struggles for the possession of thrones in India; many were the ambitious heroes that fell on the field of battle amongst the common soldiers.

The distinguished men and rulers were introduced into a drama in three ways side by side—through flattery, slander and truth. Flattery reduced human beings either to demoniac characters or demi-Gods. Slander, raising a hideous cry with a dark thick cloud of dust, took her stand on the top of a great tower to hear the thousand echoes. Truth presented a mirror to the flatterers and wafted away the duststorm of slander revealing the faces of flatterers and calumniators. Truth thus guides and conducts all through the all-perplexing labyrinth of human life.

Durjodhana returned to Hastinapur and was pining away

with grief at the prosperity and greatness of the Pandavas. He received large presents from the kings as homages on behalf of the Emperor Yudhisthira at Indraprastha. The ingenuity of the great architect Maya made Durjodhana commit the sad mistake of taking land for water. He was thus made the laughing-stock of the assembly. The old King Dhritarastra, coming to know of this, sent for Durjodhana and read him a sound lecture to the effect that he should not be grieved at the prosperity of the Pandavas.

Human success depends upon good conduct more than anything else; and Dhritarastra cited instances of Kings Janaka, Yuvanasva, Vrishadarbhi, Prasenajit and other conquerors who went to Heaven. Covetousness produces evil results. Covetousness is but another name for ignorance. Attachment, hate, joy, sorrow, vanity, lust, anger, pride, jealousy, envy, idleness, etc., are the fruits of ignorance. The story of Prahlad, the great Asura King, devotee of Divine Love, who snatched the throne of Heaven from Indra, was recited.* Good conduct and knowledge are the essentials of all worldly success. Thus Dhritarastra admonished Durjodhana: "If you really want greater prosperity than Yudhisthira, then try to follow this. Remember what the Goddess of Prosperity said to Indra, King of Heaven:—'Prosperity, power, truth, good works and righteousness arise from knowledge and good conduct.'"

Who could be a more miserable man than Durjodhana who had God and his own conscience within him fighting against him constantly? Happy is the man who flees from the appearance of evil to keep his conscience free from offence. Conscience, overburdened, as it was, with guilt and goaded by painful apprehensions, was in the case of Durjodhana too hardened to be charmed away. "Ah! miserable me! which way shall I fly?" exclaimed Durjodhana in a fit of agony. "What a miserable life is mine! Death would have been better than this. Would to God that I, too, had died the death of a hero like Sisupala than have lived to suffer in this way! Woe is me! What is next to betide! Fate has ruled supreme over all my tricks and plots. How can I show my face to the world? What I saw, I wish I had not lived to remember! Alas! I had to come back here, bearing in silence the laughter and insults even of Yudhisthira's brothers and servants; I was beguiled by the clever and beautiful display of art and science everywhere. I made a fool of myself. Is there none to help me out of this?" He told his old father in anger, opening his

* Shanti Parvan, Chapter CXXIV.

heart to him. His self-control vanished; a helpless sob broke his voice: "What will become of me? Who else but you can help me out of my trouble? Ah miserable me! Infinite wrath! Infinite despair! Happiness is not for me! During these long years of my life I have learnt to bear the changes of fate patiently. Why did I go to the Rajasuya Sacrifice of Yudhisthira? Why did you ask me to go there? To think that you are blind has been my everlasting suffering, and hence arose all this trouble and woe! I am now weary of life. You have been in the habit of telling old stories to me, just to befool me; but I know very well that your love for me is gone. You are cold and callous, and for that God has cursed you with blindness." He fell into a swoon. Everyone thought that he would not live. The old King's brother-in-law, Sakuni, leapt from his seat and took him in his arms. The touch had a magic effect; Durjodhana heaved a very deep breath. With help of men Sakuni removed him from his father's presence. Oh what a wretched creature was this man Durjodhana! The cruel shafts of jealousy pierced deep into his heart and denied him even the peace of sleep. He would sit by his friends and associates from dawn to dark, sometimes lost in deep reveries, sometimes crying aloud with great vehemence, sometimes shedding silent tears of impotent rage. The splendour and grandeur of the great sacrifice always haunted his mind and kept alive the burning memory of the glory of the great Yudhisthira. Durjodhana was burning with hate. What an ignoble soul rotting in passion! What a miserable coward engrossed with the one thought of injuring the pious Emperor of India, who had entrusted him with the responsible task of receiving valuable gifts of precious stones, metals, etc., as tributes from the great Kings of India who owed allegiance to the Emperor; and all the while he had been scheming to possess them! He had had past experience—all his attempts had failed miserably, his last attempt, for example, to convert the great sacrifice of Rajasuya into a battle-field bringing him only shame and misery. Life then seemed to have been infinitely perplexing —he found in his heart instinctive dread and jealousy of his rivals, knowing full well of his own powerlessness to compete with them both physically and mentally, individually and together. His hidden sufferings had racked the darkened soul. He had a sore fight within him against the flesh and the devil. Riches are a snare and a decoy to both soul and body!

The germ of the comprehensive Epic was more recognisable in

many of the worthless anecdotes, retailed to amuse the audience as in a drama or in a fiction. Its later development and enlargement was certainly unusual and beyond expectation. Drama or fiction supplies the world with novel pictures of sentiments, just to satisfy the thirst and appetite of the vulgar. The mind dances in quick succession with the stakes of games and the gains and losses, rioting in delights which nature and fortune with all their bounty cannot bestow. Thus fiction creates dreams of rapture and anguish, and the mind accepts false pictures as real. They do not raise any question of religion, but serve the purpose of supplying emotional experiences and creating abhorrence of all sorts of vices and intemperance. The Pandavas, much less the ideal Yudhisthira, were not among such examples to be condemned publicly. Fiction or drama sometimes offer treacherous representations of manners and characters whose authenticity cannot be proved by human psychology. Such joy and mirth—and yet they yield no fruit of any worth to society. Sinful hearts must have sinful delights and be able to keep sinful company. A great Emperor like Yudhisthira could never be a party to it. Yudhisthira and his wife, in fact cannot be characters of a fiction, introduced to create emotions of sympathy on account of their cruel sufferings and insults and followed by some efforts for their relief.

It is said in a matchless creation of drama that the human being is incomplete. A man or a woman can scarcely forget Ego; and to subdue it training and culture are necessary. Fortune, while giving them money, property and power, often deprives them of brains and good qualities. The sins of tyrants are accounted virtues, if they retain their ruling powers. The law serves the strong while professing to defend the weak. Gold is the moving force, all things can be accomplished with it even to the concealment of the foulest crimes. Each man by his thought, word and deed determines his own fate and decides his own future! Kings are often showy profligates, ruled by a set of treacherous courtiers who, because of their stalwart martial bearing and a certain surface good nature, have managed to conceal their vices from the too lenient eyes of the subjects they mislead; and the rich wanton in splendid luxury and wilfully neglect the poor.

Durjodhana's grief and agony were gone when he was revived to new life and energy by his uncle Sakuni, a prince of the Gandhara Kingdom. His kingdom was conquered by his father and he was a dependant of the Kuru Court. He passed his time in listless games of dice and was seeking for an opportunity

to be revenged. There was no prince living then so shameless or who could tell a lie with a bolder and better face than Sakuni or his nephew Durjodhana. They were bent on practising deception upon a virtuous King like Yudhisthira.

The old King Dhritarastra sent a messenger to enquire how Durjodhana was, and was relieved to hear that he was well. From that time he was very much exercised over the thought of losing his son, if his ambitions were not fulfilled. He was trying to fit his life to the aspirations of his wicked son. It was an evil hour. Durjodhana again approached his father in a different mood altogether and asked him to help him to be prosperous. He requested his father to ask Yudhisthira with his brothers to pass some time with them. His uncle, Sakuni, had shown him how he would conquer everything from Yudhisthira by dice-play. The great Kings, whom the Kuru Court were entertaining, would be present there and before them, as an Emperor of India, he could not refuse the challenge of playing the game. They would prepare a better pandal for the purpose of the dice-play, and also an exhibition of art which would humiliate the Pandavas when they witnessed it. What they had amassed for years would disappear like a dream within a few hours. He continued: "I would beseech you not to hear the words of the wicked Vidura who has been working against our interests all throughout. Pray send him there to bring the Pandavas, when we could prepare here everything to our heart's satisfaction." Dhritarastra first began to vacillate, impelled by the senility of age or by something else, but at last sent for Vidura and told him all about his son's intention.

Vidura's hair stood on end, and with long-drawn face, he remained speechless for some time. He could not approve of the proposal of foolish Durjodhana. He would be the last man to be a party to it. He exclaimed in great wrath:—"Oh great King! how often have I told you to give up Durjodhana when he was born and brayed like an ass, but you heard me not. You were denounced openly by your own subjects for your past conduct, yet you are for pursuing the very same course of doing harm to the most obedient and good Pandavas for no offence at all. What have they done to you, or to your sons, that you want to deceive them in the manner you have planned? What they have earned by the sweat of their brows you should not think of taking from them in the way you have suggested! May God spare you and your children! Think of it coolly before you would decide on any action!" Even

then, in that very Pandemonium of Hell, the light of Heaven was flashed on Vidura.

The activity of a rational being depends mainly upon his real end. A parent is more accountable for the training of a child than the poor creature itself in its infancy and youth, especially in the case of a King. Ignorance begets prejudice, whose product is passion. Discipline and the law of habit are the two most important duties of parents and are to be enforced on their children. If they act as guides and teachers of their children in youth, then in their old age their true dignity can command reverence. The acts of virtue must ripen into habits which will greatly help the formation of character; no more is the reading out of a few precepts of bygone days sufficient. The children of the devil are those who only look for the possession of wealth and prosperity by hook or by crook. What a sad state of things! who bear nothing, hope for nothing but are ever thinking evil! Such a mind becomes the master and not the guardian of youths. Its possessor cannot bear the afflictions of the World patiently but likes to improve his own position by depriving others through deception. Durjodhana suffered from an inferiority complex in comparing his own possessions and position with those of the Pandavas. By improving himself a man can be a benefactor to himself as well as set a good example to others with whom he associates. In the society of men such a man is like the seed of a sweet flower that will spring up in another's bosom and multiply itself. But things were quite contrary in the Kuru Court. The old King Dhritarastra was quite unmindful of his duties towards his sons. He was led by the wicked Durjodhana and his odious counsellors. Melancholy is an instrument of the devil by which he accomplishes his wicked purposes. Melancholia is a very common disease amongst the uncontrolled spoilt children of fortune. The disease was sought to be cured by a medicine worse than the disease itself. The idea of inflicting pain is seldom thought of by the sportsman. The sordid sport of gambling was thought to be a splendid form of relaxation by the Kshatriya race in those days—fit to rank with hunting. They restricted and controlled these evils of society but dared not check them. To the great royal families of ancient India it became a constant feature of relaxation and leisure, if not an aid to their political aims. Nala and Damayanti were disgraced and the former recovered his kingdom by dice-play. It was going to be repeated in the Kuru Court to wrest his possessions from the great and good Emperor Yudhisthira. This was

the coup d'etat planned in the Kuru Court. The foolish King Dhritarastra relied on Fate, and his sons hoped to win the Empire by dice-play. They were the great Epicureans of the day. Ideas and acts were judged in their relationship to life. Whatever enlarged life was good. Life is the end and means of all.

A great hall was to be built to accommodate all the Kings, who were mainly of the party of conservatives, and it was to be built with a view to outrival that hall where the Kings had assembled to pay tribute to the Emperor Yudhisthira. The dice-play was not only an ordinary pastime but proved to be a great political institution of ancient India. Yudhisthira was called upon to explain the new constitution; and Draupadi was insulted for her foolish attachment to her husband and his brothers. Such an accomplished princess was thought to be prosperity itself. This was the great aim of Durjodhana—to separate her from the Pandavas, if possible, and to make the pious Yudhisthira fall out with his brothers on her account. He could not foresee the result.

The faculty of imagination has been the great spring of all human activity and the principal source of human progress. The ardour of the selfish is to better their fortunes and appear before the world as the greatest men of the day, while the zeal of patriots and philosophers has always been to advance the virtue and happiness of the human race by their own great sacrifices. If one destroys this faculty, the condition of man then becomes as stationary as that of brutes. Man's inborn self-indulgence will become paramount. Wealth will govern both classes and masses. Politics will be corrupt. There will be no restraining influence on the laxity of social morals.

The moral and mental attitude of the ancient Indian people then was a philosophic cheerfulness and obedience to the Will of God, but this did not include a tame submission to every kind of tyranny or a passive acceptance of injury inflicted upon them by human oppressions. One must fight his destiny and not submit to it!

The ornament of a meek and quiet spirit is, in the sight of God, of great price. Life in itself is serious and noble, although there are many men who elect to view life from a very low, material or even farcical standpoint. This glorious creation is not a caprice or a farce but is designed for a cause and should move steadily towards that great cause. The poets of the Pouranic Age revealed the earliest splendour of the days when Poesy was newly born—when Gods and Goddesses were made

to adorn the sphere of actions of great men and women, when brave deeds of chivalry and self-sacrifice became exalted by a riotous and rich imagination into supernatural feats—even the feat of conquering hell. Then love was not mere lust, marriage not mere convenience nor life mere covetousness of gain. There was something higher which accorded with the passage of Scripture: "LET US MAKE MAN IN OUR IMAGE AFTER OUR LIKENESS." Integrity of soul lifts a man above the common level and, unconscious of it himself, he wins the silent honour and respect of all his fellows. God's love is realised in hidden strength of spirit and mind when a man suffers beneath heavy chastisements.



THE GAMBLING MATCH.

CHAPTER IV.

The Gambling Match.

The reasons that prompted Yudhisthira to enter into dice-play after the performance of the great Rajasuya sacrifice can only remain one of the most inexplicable of riddles. Dice was one of the chief social recreations mentioned in the Rig Veda. It was found that cheating at dice-play was one of the most frequent crimes, against which the ordinances of Varuna were proclaimed. The words ' cheat ' and ' rogue ' were synonyms of gamesters. The gambler deplores his inability to cast off the spell of the dice, even though it has brought ruin upon him and his household. This irresistible fascination was described in the gambler's lament in the Veda. The Yajur Veda described those who haunted the gambling hall as pillars of the play-house (Sabhasthanu).

Governments immanate from social influences; and the reigning monarchs govern society. Society governs politics. The social rule of the Indian Kings and Emperors bred heroes and poets. The life of a King and the love of a Queen were enough for a nation's peace of mind. When a strong man or a woman ruled a nation, he or she was sure to leave a mark. The Scripture says that man should ' take and eat and live for ever.' There was a time when extraordinary beauty of person and good qualities of head and heart never failed to attract a large number of admirers, and even now the names of the Emperor Yudhisthira and the Empress Draupadi rule the imaginations of orthodox Hindus in India. They were staunch upholders of the eternal principles of justice to which individuals, Emperors, Empresses, as well as nations, should aspire, not as a passing phase but for all time. They were immortalised as divine. They did not plunge into the filth of life simply because to be morally dirty was at the moment fashionable and very much applauded by society. There were political intrigues for the suppression of truth and honesty of purpose. They did not lose sight of their principles; their honour was not like the wind; nothing could vitiate them although there were occasions when even angels might have departed from their legitimate duties and their

sense of social decorum. An Emperor was made to gamble recklessly, solely for the reason that it was then considered by the great Kings as *the* pastime; stakes were high and fortunes could be wasted or won. To refuse to play when called upon to do so was then considered cowardly and to show an ill-bred disposition, for an Emperor who was crowned, but recently, in the great sacrifice of Rajasuya before the assembly of Kings. The losing of a few provinces, wealth and fortune, as debts of honour, by an august benign Emperor was then considered a source of great prestige and a legitimate diversion. Aristocratic courtiers, associated with the best and the highest in the land, were the boon companions of Kings and Emperors; they were all waiting to win a great fortune at a game of dice. There was no contempt or indignation that such men should be permitted in good society. That was then called "Seeing Life." This game of dice was resorted to by the Kurus in a beautiful pavilion, specially built for the purpose, and an invitation with a challenge to the new Emperor Yudhisthira was sent through Vidura, the great Minister of the Kurus. As an Emperor Yudhisthira felt awkward but feelings of delicacy prevented him from refusing the challenge. Yudhisthira was no fool, but the wisest Emperor of India and ideal in every respect. He was a politician, moralist and religious man of the first order. Yudhisthira heard from Vidura that all the worst gamblers of the day were requisitioned to defeat him in the games of chance and he learnt that the worst deception would be practised there; the question naturally would arise as to why he should go there and play.

The ideal Emperor would be guilty of participating in it if it were on the grounds of customs and vanity; but these he had already disregarded in the matter of the report of Draupadi's marriage with five husbands. He told Vidura that he would not disobey his old, weak uncle, and would prove to the world that he or his brothers were not at all addicted to the enjoyments of life, but were quite alive to the dictates of conscience and duty. He would prove to the world how far human depravity could go, how he could bring the wicked to their knees by his generosity and his spiritual force. His chief sin was the desire to create a very powerful impression before the assembly which would stagger them and make for the beneficial result of drawing the Kurus towards him in everlasting friendship. Before he left for the Kuru Court he must have told his brothers and wife: "Let us remain good whatever happens. Let us do good to

get rid of evil. Let us speak the truth in the mildest manner possible against error. We must hold to what is right and true. Let us not be indignant at those who have false ideas. There is no harm in convincing them, if we can, by our own conduct." The weak are afraid of the trials of life in the enemy's camp. The wise beard the lion in its den. Yudhisthira believed implicitly in the divine dispensation of justice—Virtue would rise and vice would fall. The lives and history of the Pandavas and the party they formed epitomised the chief features of the social, moral and religious reforms of the age in which they flourished. Friendship requires an absolute union of souls together as one; thus the Pandavas were one instead of five different entities. What the great Vyasa conceived Emerson re-echoed: "The essence of friendship is entireness, a total magnanimity and trust. It must not surmise or provide for infirmity. It treats its object as a God that it may defy both." "Ah! seest thou not, O brother, that thus we part only to meet again on a higher platform, and only be more each other's because we are more our own."

The gambling hall was richly decorated to vie with that of the Rajasuya sacrifice and an attempt was made to avenge the sorry plight of Durjodhana and his brothers to which they were led by the mistakes they made there. Scenes of the Pandavas losing everything at the proposed game were depicted beforehand in pictures, and of Draupadi, made naked by Dushasana who had hold of her hair—in order that the Pandavas might lose their tempers and play the fools there; but it was all in vain. The attitude of a majority of the audience in the hall was patent—they took their seats for a deeper purpose than mere curiosity. The bulk of the assemblage was composed of men and dependants of the Kuru Court; very few women were present. A very curious incident took place when the Emperor Yudhisthira with his brothers, led by Vidura, entered the hall. They were greeted with cheers by the onlookers who all stood up. The demeanour of the Emperor was serene and unconcerned; whatever else the audience might have taken him for, they could not find in him a coward who was afraid of playing the game or irritated in any way by the insulting pictures painted on the walls. After due exchange of the usual ceremonies of meeting in the great assemblage, the personality of the Emperor dominated over the gathering. He faced the audience majestically and stood firmly against the playing of the game of dice but he made it plain that if it was a command

from his uncle, the King Dhritarastra, he was powerless. The old King asked him to comply with the request of his beloved son Durjodhana. Yudhisthira protested strongly against playing with Sakuni on behalf of Durjodhana, but in vain. Yudhisthira played and lost, one after another, all his great possessions. In the mad excitement, in order to win back all, he had staked his brothers and his beloved wife, but again he lost. Everyone present looked on and said nothing; the last stake proved disastrous to the Emperor.

The Kurus and their friends rose from their seats in wild excitement. Repose of manner, dignity, or elegance of deportment were no longer to be discovered in the despicable Durjodhana. He sent his brother Dushasana to the palace to break the news to Draupadi and asked him to bring her to the pavilion immediately, as she had become his bondmaid. Draupadi told Dushasana that she was not lost in the game of dice, for Yudhisthira had become a slave before he had played the last game and, as such, no slave had the right to gamble away a free Empress of India. Dushasana heeded not her words but carried into effect the insulting picture that the painter drew at the instance of Durjodhana, wrongfully seizing her by her hair and dragging her into the pavilion. The painting of the scenes, although not in the text of the epic, was introduced just to show the dramatic transformation of the actual fact that she was only brought into the assembly which was then considered an outrage on her honour and dignity. Yudhisthira remained silent, which was then taken as consent; for he had played the game and lost it. He sealed his mouth and became a silent spectator. Durjodhana was so much elated that he lost all control and forgot all decency of manners. Yudhisthira did not like to convert it into a battle-field. It would not be consistent with his promise in the proclamation that he made and which he did not disclose to any one else. He acted in good faith and was befooled. The old King was quite beside himself for he too enquired if Draupadi was won or not, when Draupadi was dragged into the assembly by Dushasana, the wicked brother of Durjodhana. At this moment of tumult the blind King was roused from his joy. The whole place was filled with commotion. The sad plight of Draupadi made the audience shake in fear—only the evil souls rejoiced in their wickedness but they dared not look straight in her face. They were like swine who nose the refuse and are happy. Durjodhana's influence was irresistible and gradually dominated the whole

assemblage. Little did they know what cruel fate lurked behind this gorgeous show of vanity and pride.

Draupadi was not a princess to be afraid of anything; she could no longer brook the insult. She threw away the garment as soon as it was touched by the cruel Dushasana. She broke the pitch and toss of the mad game by her piteous shrieks. Every eye was fixed on her, ears intent to hear her, only the wicked eyes of Durjodhana did not dare to cast a glance at that face, crimson with rage. Yudhisthira sat motionless like a statue and his brothers stood up, shaking with rage, their arms ready for action, and looking up to their brother for instant order. Could it be a fact that the Kuru Court was then so degraded and fallen? The Kuru princes and their friends were levelling lewd jests at the Empress of India, stripping off her loin cloth in the open Kuru Court before the elders like King Dhritarastra, Bhisma, Kripa, Drona and others! Could it be a part of royal princes' diversions in the Kuru Court? Would the fine arguments of logic levelled by Draupadi be of any use before the Assembly whose hearts were hardened by vice and voluptuousness? Could it be that Draupadi was the standard-bearer of Divine Love, invoking God in person there to prove her chastity against the false report that she had five husbands and to protect her from the cruel hands of the tyrants? "This old man, Bhisma, asks me to question my husband if I am staked or not, if I am lost or not in a game of dice. These questions do not arise at all for I know very well that a man of my husband's character and probity will never do such a thing. There is something in man's own individuality which prevents it. I have replied to the unjust charges in which the Kuru princes and their elders, like Bhisma, were openly indulging in the Kuru Court." Draupadi then shouted out:—"Are you all alive or dead!" No sooner were these words heard than there followed a general stampede in the Assembly as if they felt the touch of the hand of death on their shoulder—such was the effect of a guilty conscience on the worst gamblers, like Sakuni. The wicked princes with their adherents were there to see the fun. They were convinced that the great Yudhisthira would not go against his own proclamation and thus they were not afraid of their lives. Durjodhana cried out:—"Go on, Draupadi, we all want to hear you." Draupadi said:—"Alas! that the Kuru Court under you has been reduced to this condition! Yudhisthira was made to play the game against his own will, and deception and fraud of the worst nature were practised. Who could say that I was law-

fully won? I am the lawful wife of Yudhisthira and daughter-in-law of the Kuru family of Kings! What made you think that I was a servile woman. You belied the family in which you all were born. You ought to be ashamed of what you did, instead of jesting with me. I can bear it no longer. I am the chaste wife and princess of a great family of Kings. Dare you to treat me in this way? Are you not afraid of death? You are all tarnishing the traditions of this Kshatriya family of Kings. Beware of your conduct." The learned men of the Kuru Court hung their heads in shame at this most chaste and refined rebuke administered by her. The trumpery shows of arguments and petty intrigues were exposed. Everything was also so sudden and unexpected that she felt herself quite distressed, having had to listen with enforced patience to the wicked taunts of Karna and Durjodhana, not to speak of the rambling gossip and vile gestures going on there. Draupadi was undeniably a lovely princess and Empress of India—tall and elegantly formed, with an almost regal form and grace of manner, full of all embellishments and accomplishments, deserving to be considered, as she was one of the reigning beauties of the day. Few could reason ably dispute her physical and mental perfection or question the right she had to tempt the passions of princes and trample them under foot with an air of superiority. She gained great social successes through her intelligence, education, tact and ability. She stamped her foot to give emphasis to her words and the whole Assembly raised their eyes in horror and amazement. "Poor Durjodhana! there is one way to escape from death but alas! that is unknown to thee! You know when the body is too weak to support the soul it is time for the soul to depart with what speed it can command. Thou art marked for death! Death shall come to thee through the traitorous speech that you uttered with your vile tongue! Thou hast wilfully wasted the golden opportunity of not following the good advice of your great and wise minister, Vidura. Death, sudden and fierce as the leap of the desert panther upon its prey, shall await thee for thou hast cherished within thyself the passion of envy and the deadly poison of doubt, the accursed disbelief in the existence of God and life eternal! Thy spirit is that of one lost and rebellious whose days were void of any examples worth following—a poor deluded fool, an unresisting prey to your passions and vile propensities! Durjodhana! you voluntarily degraded your own life and poisoned society by your bad example. What was the use of intellect, genius and culture, if

they could not control self, if they were not turned to account to serve as a bright and noble example to others! A fair face is not the visible reflection of a good soul! The whole world cannot but pity such a prince, misguided and lost in the company of despicable men like Karna, Sakuni, etc. Such a man aspires to win a princess like Draupadi without the requisite qualifications to realise that the graces of her mind and spirit are equal to those of her outward form. May God grant thy soul a chance of penance and just redemption!" Durjodhana's lips quivered pathetically in an attempt to frame his struggling thoughts into language to answer her words, which pricked his dead conscience severely. He had never been truly humbled but twice in his life—once when he could not win Draupadi at the Swayamvara marriage ceremony in Drupada's Court and now discomfited and disgraced in his own Court and before his friends by Draupadi. He first thought of possessing Draupadi when he saw her and hatched a plot to win her, but miserably failed. The fairy castle of perfect pleasure and peace which he had built in the air shook to its foundations. Before him he had left only political fame and worldly honour. Great tumult and uproar reigned supreme; everyone thought that a great disaster was imminent. All were stupefied, except Durjodhana and his friends. He took a mean advantage of the situation and began to cut indecent jokes at Draupadi. The wicked gambling match was at the end utilised in the fulfilment of the grand conception of divine love as it culminated in the drama of Love's Redemption.

Chapter V.

Love's Redemption.

Yudhisthira, the ideal Emperor of India, remained firm and showed to the world how he conquered his feelings of resentment towards the Kuru Court. The slow fire of resentment did not smoulder within his pure mind at this exhibition of spleen from the Kuru princes. The great objective in the social life of an Emperor then was to hide all savage passions and domestic differences from the gaze of the vulgar crowd and majestic assembly.

What would a man or a woman forfeit if he or she should gain the whole world and lose his or her own soul? How many of the cultured people do possess a soul or can think that there is such a being in existence? Soul is the germ of immortality and is the breath of God; if a man loses it he loses all. Man became a living being when God omnipotent breathed into his nostrils a mixture of the five elements of nature and creation —the spirit of Heaven. The soul animates and inspires all creation but few can comprehend it. The soul is the centre of all living beings, and it is lost by one's own act and will. The loss of it is marked by moral degradation and deterioration. The soul is a mirror of Heaven with which God endowed Adam and made him like an angel, but earthly passion dragged him into the depths of hell. Adam did not know human love until he met Eve. That love comes to those of handsome exterior is a common delusion of the fair sex. Bodily beauty in woman makes no lasting effect on mankind unless it is accompanied by beauty of soul—the Divine Love. The conception of Draupadi was far better than that of Eve. The companionship of a true friend is better than that of a false wife; this is the lesson of life in domestic happiness and sorrow. The majority of women do not know what great love means; their chief aims and desires are for conquest; failing in this, they fall victims to the fanatical hysteria of despair.

Bhima could no longer restrain himself and vowed vengeance, openly threatening to kill Durjodhana by breaking his hip where, displaying it, he had asked Draupadi to sit, and to drink

the blood of Dushasana for touching the garment of Draupadi. This had the magic effect. Dhritarastra fell from his seat in order to hear what Bhima was uttering with his thundering voice which seemed to shake the Assembly room. Vidura leaving his seat, cried out: "Mad men! forbear this frantic dispute." Dhritarastra spoke disapprovingly of going beyond the legitimate limits of good society and court rules.

The foolish Durjodhana rose instantly and told his father that all these would cease if they were all sincere, if they declared openly the true state of things: "Yudhisthira does not open his mouth; Draupadi has been speaking for him and abusing the Kuru elders and repeating the curtain lectures which she used to give to her husband. Let her openly declare that Yudhisthira is a liar. Let the other Pandavas join her. Then there would be an end of all this."

Karna supported his friend, saying: "Let her now choose a sixth husband." No sooner was this spoken than Arjuna rose and said:—

"O shameless braggart! I swear by my arms that thou shalt soon receive punishment at my hands."

The whole Assembly trembled at these words. Draupadi could no longer remain silent and cried out: "Know, ye wretch, that there would have been hardly any cause for these vows from Bhima and Arjuna, if I had shown you and your friends the power of my virtuous life, but I am afraid lest my good husband would be offended. His wisdom foresaw all these happenings, and he cautioned us all before. Know, ye fools! what I told you just before, you had not realised."

The social world is ruled by the moral, religious and spiritual institutions. The knowledge of Durjodhana did not extend beyond the copybook maxims of lawgivers and family customs and precedents, and for that reason he could not follow Draupadi; and yet Durjodhana aspired to become an Emperor of India. His ignorance did not provoke anger, but pity. He only knew the ordinary marriage where emotion pulsated as in beasts and birds in waves of creative passion. What did he know of the marriage of true love? Death is the dismal end of all creatures in the Universe. Where lies the difference between man and lower animals? True love cannot be found in society marriages where everything is administered by the iron hands of law and custom with the velvet gloves of material love. There material love does not find proper scope and liberty for its due growth in the expansion of the human heart; it does not develop into Heavenly love; but Draupadi's

marriage was not of that nature. The man who could sacrifice his own existence for the world was her husband and the great man who conceived that marriage and sanctified it by his presence with the blowing of the well-known conch was Sri Krishna, the emblem of Divine Love. He was the friend and well-wisher of the Pandavas—Draupadi formed the link of his spiritual friendship with them and he would redeem the great Pandavas.

The husband is the guardian and protector of his wife, but such was not the case with Draupadi. Savitri brought back to life her husband, Satyabana, even from the clutches of Yama (Pluto). Sita was the cause of the ruin of the great Ravana. Draupadi was quite a different example from all these and her husband was more perfect than Rama Chandra. The great Rama Chandra was a great monarch and performed the Rajasuya sacrifice with a golden image of Sita, for he could not find a queen free from unjust aspersions. Yudhisthira in his great Rajasuya sacrifice took Draupadi by his side as his lawful wife and the sages not only accepted her but anointed her as the Empress of India; the question of her fidelity was beyond the shadow of a doubt. Rama Chandra exiled his beloved and faithful wife unto death unjustly, even after the fire ordeal, for the mere wild aspersions and rumours of the ignorant masses. The Kurus thought that they would succeed in the case of Draupadi but they were deceived, and for that reason they were making all sorts of unjust jests before the Assembly and were insulting her. They thought Yudhisthira would follow Rama Chandra by persecuting Draupadi. Yudhisthira was not the man who spied upon his wife or set others to do it. He did not listen at doors and interrogate everybody about her movements or those of his brothers. He was not the man who would ever play the part of a dastardly traitor to prove his love for the world, as the Kurus all imagined he would do. He was not the man to scandalise Draupadi in any way; never in thought or will would he stoop down to persecute her. Yudhisthira did not belong to the primeval age of the natural state of male and female in which there was free intercourse, nor did he belong to the foppish age of civilisation to which we belong.

Love is not a sort of whip or cudgel with which to flog the poor soul of the lover. Persecuted Sita disappeared into the maternal breast of the earth from which she sprang. Draupadi was neither Savitri nor Sita. The goddess Uma died in the sacrifice of her father Daksha upon hearing her husband's calumny.

Draupadi who was said to have come out of the sacrificial fire at the sacrifice which her father was performing to recover his lost Kingdom, was known by the name of Panchali. She was pure as fire and was born to consume what was dross. She proved that there was a struggle for existence between the spirit and flesh of mankind. The true function of the flesh was to express the spirit. Little do people know what vast avenues of majestic possibility arise out of confronting earth with Heaven and of living the old passional life of Heaven upon the redeemed and reawakened earth. God is all love, piety and goodness. Love dwells in the mind, ascends in the spirit and finally makes the union in that Divine Love which pervades the Universe. This is the true implication of Draupadi's marriage, in her union of Universal love with Yudhisthira. One had to vouch for truths that seemed like romances; facts like fables; but miracles did take place when God chose, though sceptics denied them. Draupadi says:—"If it was not so, you would have been consumed by this time. God, omnipotent Father, knows what is good and best. His love will redeem the world. He cannot be bribed by prayers, so I do not pray," He who rules the Universe knows Draupadi's heart. The power of Divine Love is always very great and it seemed then that it came down from Heaven to Earth in Draupadi. She stood up against the howling atheism of the Kuru Court. She would make and not break the human ambition of going to Heaven, bringing new fire from Heaven to impress the message on the human faculties.

Yielding to a swift impulse she threw herself on her knees with clasped hands, resting in wordless peace, her whole soul entranced in a divine passion of faith, hope and love; and with a pure childlike resignation of absolute simplicity and humility she offered herself to God above. The suppliant glance of Draupadi's eyes, full of bright tears falling through her long drooping lashes fast and thick, was enough to melt any human being, but the Great Assembly remained unmoved till they were brought to their senses by natural bad omens. The loving heart of the great princess and Empress of India was like the prismatic ray of Divine Grace, reflected in the polished crystal frame of Draupadi, and its brilliance displayed all the weaknesses of the Great Assembly of godless sensual princes of those days! They did not understand love unseen—they could not recognise a love manifest. But Nature gave vent to it in ominous signs. Superstitious fears were then easily aroused and the great hall which was once full was seen to be

deserted. There were fearful sounds from birds and beasts; and the religious priest loudly cried out: "Let there be peace. Heaven forbid disaster and death." The whole Assembly with one voice said: "Let us shake the dust of this accursed place off our feet and get home."

Dhritarastra was at last aroused from his stupor and rebuked Durjodhana severely in the open Assembly. The very soldiers on guard seemed entranced, the courtiers pressed forward, curiously eager and attentive to the bad omens, the crying of beasts and birds, which, even in their happiest tones, are little better than mournful. King Dhritarastra, moving restlessly, his cheeks alternately flushing and paling, his hand grasping the sceptre, broke out in speech amidst tremendous roars of applause which made the amber pendants of lights swing to and fro through the vaulted roof of the great gambling hall. The great God was not to be appeased with the mere exhibition of Dhritarastra's wrath—there was, it seemed, a sort of consistent demand from the assembly of good men there: "Oh old King! you must compensate for the unjust wrongs done by your sons." These are all dreams and vague phantoms, creations of imaginative brain, yet fair enough to fill the heart of the mass with speechless longings for such ethereal raptures unseen and unknown. It is in the gift of a poet to move a strong man's heart by the sincere vehement protests of a woman's appeal to God, and to sing the death of a hero with the result that many straightway seek to die such a death, and to warm the cold blood, that does not easily warm, by scenes of the stakes in a game of chance. Tears coming from the depths of a very warm, sincere, secretly tortured soul could not but melt the heart of the God of Gods. No greater triumph could a poet hope to achieve than this. God's bewildering spells conquered the most dauntless heroes of the age. What was that love of God and from where had it come? It is just like asking the tide of a river to tell the secret of its attraction to the moon.

Eyes wandered from one to the other in the vast assembly, lips were pursed, brows contracted with a heavy weight of pain, yet no one could speak, though efforts were made to do so. The chastest Diana that ever lived did not escape unjust calumny, but nothing could please God more than purity and rectitude of soul! A world of intrigue, folly, infidelity and falsehood—how would a chaste lady like Draupadi extricate herself; that was a question to be solved. In ancient India the three virtues of woman were chastity, humility and

obedience—Draupadi not only devoted her body, mind and soul to the service of her lord, the Emperor of India, but to God above, the fountain-head of Divine Love. The denouement of the dramatic art in the dice-play scene was reached—it was the most rigorous discipline which the aged King enforced over Yudhisthira, anointed Emperor of India, and to which he faithfully submitted. Yudhisthira had known that he would sink into insignificance and extreme poverty by indulgence in the foolish game of dice which had been denounced and regarded as one of the four vices which all good men should always avoid; he was not agreeable to play the game; he was aware of the deception of Sakuni; yet he played, like a fool, at the command of his uncle Dhristarastra and staked all. The filial piety, love and discipline to an uncle and a regent, appointed by his dead father, reached its acme in the acceptance of the great challenge in the playing of dice in the Kuru Court, presided over by his uncle, the blind Dhritarastra, the grand old patriarch Bhisma, and the preceptor Drona. Caution is required in judging the characters of individuals who have the highest standard of life. The temporary failure of a recognised ethical standard is not deliberate, nor is it the result of wilful neglect of duty nor of perverted ignorance. It is what conditions for the safety of human society render inevitable even to the best men and women of the day. Sometimes false reports have been used by the recognised great men of the age to accomplish the great ends of humanity. Falsehood is not actually so, when it is used as one's pretence to end the private greed of the tyrants of the day without the shedding of blood and loss of life. Hansa and Dimvaka committed suicide owing to the stratagem of Sri Krishna and Jarasandha, who wanted to be the Emperor of India, was killed in the duel with Bhima. It would be the height of presumptuous folly to dogmatise at all on a subject of such profound difficulty—beyond this, that everything depends on the voluntary rejection of evil with the choice of good. Man and woman are judged by certain limited standards of society in tribes, classes and nations but such is not the case with Kings and Queens, Emperors and Empresses of India. It is universally admitted that in social, ethical, religious or spiritual reforms the initiative is always given by individuals like Kings and Queens, Emperors and Empresses. He or she cannot be influenced by ancestral limitations of caste, creed and colour. The seeming temporary failure might be a factor in the winning of eternal victory; the new step is invariably made by a man who is endowed with the

proper knowledge and foresight to decide what is the action of self-sacrifice requisite to arouse the impulse of all in the right direction. The judgment of God decides in favour of his action and goodness lies in the rejection of evil and in integrity of purpose. A man or a woman capable of this are the ideals of a nation and of a kingdom. Society is created by men but the test of real ethical success or failure is the fulfilment of the moral and spiritual relationship of God Who made the universe and His created beings. The temporary relationship of man and woman is more or less concerned with society, but when it reaches the spiritual domain it becomes a question of religion. It was in the fitness of things in the great drama of life that the old King Dhritarastra had to declare publicly love's redemption, by the return of the kingdom to the much persecuted Draupadi and Yudhisthira, setting at naught the stakes of dice-play. The old King called upon Draupadi, as the foremost of all his daughters-in-law, chaste and devoted to virtue, to demand any boon she would have. Draupadi came forward with due obeisance and in a faltering voice said: "My husband Yudhisthira and his son be released from the unjust wager of the game of dice." The Assembly was now convinced that Yudhisthira was her husband and Prativindhya their son. The old King said again to ask for another one and she did so; and the other Pandavas were released. She refused the third boon to demonstrate to the world that her love was not for riches but for humanity. "May all the Gods hold fast our bond of friendship! Now wander home like a shadow in a dream! This gambling match is after all a play of princes and a pastime full of amusements—it is now over; it is a droll thing to meditate upon the wild pranks and stale stock phrases of jests. Here are the boons given for the great sacrifice to set at rest the wild slander concerning the five husbands—for the unfaithful there is no love, for the impure there is no joy." An Indian wife was then not a purchased chattel, who could change her masters; the whole world cared for her with a sort of impersonal love; such a woman needs no protection. Woman is to guide and guard the souls of men. Beauty is the most perishable sort of commodity but it is all the majority of men look for in their bargains with the fair sex. Beauty is not a question of the outward shape of body, gracefulness of manners disposed in the proper places; illness spoils it, a trying climate destroys it. Remember: "Handsome is that handsome does."

It was Vidura,* the wise minister, who made King Dhritarastra grant the boons. He had warned the old King, thrilling the air when he spoke. Every eye was turned to his fine figure and striking countenance. Who could resist him? Not one in that assemblage. But the beauty of Draupadi's face and the brilliance of her flashing eyes made her the conspicuous object and chief centre of attention.

Actual joy comes out of evil. If men and women were true to their immortal instincts and to the great God who made them to hear the voices of angels whom once they knew and loved, to be wanderers among the deserts of darkness and to pine for the light celestial that was formerly one of the five elements of their beings, then the closed doors of Paradise would be opened. Draupadi, lifted towards her Creator on the prayer of her pure life, proved to the world the sources of her great moral and spiritual strength against the futile and unjust attempts to wreak vengeance on her.

To love for love's sake only is really an absolute virtue. If one secures an unique example of real beauty, purity and accomplishment of very high order in a lover then he or she is fortunate. If one wins the true love of anyone, then he or she secures a greater fortune than all earthly possessions.

The most famous drama of Divine Love was conceived in the ultimate salvation of the Pandavas through the exquisite, delicate and innocent Draupadi, a beautiful princess who stood against dull and heartless, social and religious injunctions and the doctrines and strict customs of ages. It is a woman who either lifts a man to heaven or drives him to hell—this is what the Epics describe. The immortal Furies made woman for man's torture!

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* Sabha Parvan, Chapter LXXXI, Verse 26.

CHAPTER VI.

Myth and Truth.

The second dice-play is an absolute fiction and is not found either in the table of contents* or in the wailings of Dhritarastra. Nor is it in consonance with the dramatic Mahabharata, as it stultifies the blessings and boons of Dhritarastra to Draupadi and the Pandavas. The conduct of Yudhisthira at the gambling match can be defended on more than one ground. He was an ideal Emperor of the age and his conduct had to fit in with the texts of the Manu Samhita, Vedanta philosophy and the great family traditions of the Kurus. It is a well-known theme of the Mahabharata that Yadu, the eldest son, was deprived of the throne for his disobedience. The old King Dhritarastra was the Machiavel of ancient India. He received the Pandava family with all the love of an uncle who was very anxious for their welfare; but the intelligent Yudhisthira realised that his own conduct was partly the cause of Dhritarastra's enmity. He saw that the question of Draupadi's marriage was the main object of insult at the dice-play. He realised that it was intended to make the great sacrifice of Rajasuya, where he was anointed as Emperor of India, appear as a child's play when the great crown and possessions disappeared as the stakes of the game. The old King Dhritarastra immediately after the Rajasuya sacrifice, instead of publicly impeaching Yudhisthira's conduct for ignoring him altogether by failing to ask his consent to the marriage of Draupadi and the performance of Rajasuya sacrifice, had ordered the gambling match. Yudhisthira saw all this and could have easily punished Durjodhana and his followers then and there, if he liked, like Sisupala; but then he would have again been guilty of violating his uncle's authority, presiding, as he did, over the Kuru Court where Yudhisthira was invited to play at dice. It will not be out of place here to give the brief implications of the texts of the Manu Samhita† and Vedanta philosophy.

A man must bear insults in a manner which will reveal his

* Anukramanika, Chapter I, Adi Parvan.

† Chapter VI, Slokas 47—49.

good manners, conduct, birth and culture, and should not give tit for tat.

Generous revenge was the keynote of ancient civilisation; and the Vedanta philosophy was demonstrated by the example of Yudhisthira's passive resistance in going into the forests to practise the religion enunciated in that philosophy, instead of caring for wealth and kingdom. The trial of Yudhisthira's fitness to become an Emperor of India was fully demonstrated by his conduct at the dice-play and by his renouncement of the empire in favour of the Kurus who were so eager to have it by fair or foul means, which would have resulted in useless bloodshed and the loss of many innocent lives. This effect has been neutralised by the introduction of the Anudyut Parvan in a later age by ignorant rhapsodists or playwrights.

Vyasa's name was associated with the Pouranic conception of the Mahabharata; for he had visited Yudhisthira immediately after the great sacrifice of Rajasuya to bid him *adieu* and to warn him of the coming catastrophe of a great war when the Kurus with great many Kings of India would be decimated for not restoring the empire to him after thirteen years. This made Yudhisthira openly declare in a great proclamation that he would not fight with anybody during these thirteen years—a resolution which served very well the purpose of the Kurus to retain the stakes of the dice-play.

The incidents in the lives of Yudhisthira and Draupadi, Emperor and Empress of ancient India, demonstrated the spiritual upheaval and a rare spirit of disregard for material gain. Their sudden access to fortune and kingdom by their energy, education and culture revealed the characters of a man and woman of the divine world. The boons of Dhritarastra to Draupadi and the Pandavas are the logical sequence of the idea that politics can scarcely be considered apart from society, for on the nature and character of the society depend largely the great ideals which govern it. The great Machiavel of Indian politics possessed the courage to set the example of a sovereign who would reward an ideal princess like Draupadi and princes like the Pandavas, in order to impress upon the world that he had the clear conception of his duty as the head of the family and a King.

The greatest Emperor on earth was a mere helpless babe at birth, solely dependent on others, and a helpless corpse at death; yet he was made superior over all by society and law. In God's sight all are equal, it is only men's foolish ideas and

conventions in life which make any difference. The greater the position, the heavier the burden. The man who wears outwardly the brilliant appearance of life is but the deeper in its secret bitterness—even the Emperor and the lawgiver are not immune from it. Self alone is at the core of all social creeds and customs in the world; but love means self-sacrifice for the other. Love makes the bitterest things sweet. The happiest day of a man's life is when he is threatened by death and is saved by the hand of love. A healthy and a quiet mind in a healthy and unspoilt body together form what is understood to be the highest beauty. A man or a woman has no fear if he or she is blessed with the heart and nerve to soothe the soul within and draw other souls to it with love, warning and strengthening those who need help. A human being must be prepared for all emergencies, and must confront those who by human law have been made superior in rank to the rest of mankind. One cannot urge a claim upon another to which the other cannot respond on account of their different relationship or position. The inner nature of the human being is selfish, merciless and utterly regardless of the woes of others. Human beings, ignorant of all that lies beyond the veil of the unseen, are often deceived. These deceived men for their selfish considerations often libel the weak and are the usurpers of the rights of others. Could the head of such a party be a fit and proper person to be declared the Emperor of India? The main features of reform were represented by the Pandavas, the great martyrs of the age; they taught confidence in the wisdom which could alone govern the country and their example inspired hatred against the vices which desolated the country. Generous in revenge, courageous and chivalrous, submissive in their filial love, their conduct and obedience to duty was a pleasing contrast to feudal decadence. The Pandavas and the Kurus were then hallmarked with the party labels of Liberals and Conservatives. The forms and terms of ancient Indian political and religious parties cannot be compared with the present-day western terms of political parties, but they have been used only for the sake of convenience of interpretation. Yudhisthira tried to please his uncle as best he could, quite aware of the ominous dream he saw and the interpretation of it he heard from the great Vyasa of the impending disaster of a great war after thirteen years. The Pandavas with their family were invited as friends of the Kurus and they attended the Court to perform the great tasks before them, the calls of friendship; they carried with them what grandeur of

spirit they had. That there could never be deep and lasting peace and mutual respect between the two spirits and parties was evident by now.

Love is only the reflection of a man's own worthiness acknowledged by other men. In true love body, mind and soul must co-ordinate with one another and be united. The temporal relationship of man and woman is more or less concerned with society; it cannot remain in the spiritual domain when that relationship becomes an accomplished fact. Draupadi is the lawful wife of Yudhisthira in society and in the spiritual world she is not the wife of any individual but that of five elements of a spirit who rules the Universe in the Rajasuya Sacrifice and these elements are identified with five attributes of an Emperor who will ascend to immortality of soul in Heaven above. Draupadi was identified with an ideal Empress. There is no such thing as moral good or evil in the scientific world or in the scientific view of Nature; the great question for philosophy must be how the sense of moral obligation was evolved from time to time, why social progress and well-being should depend on its active acceptance, why good—so far recognised—is invariably felt to be what ought to prevail, whether or not it actually does so. The whole question reduces itself to the search for the ultimate reason of its being which, whatever it is, as a whole and in all its parts, lies in the Divine Individuality. It is the great question of fulfilment of relationship to the spirit of the Almighty Father. Was an Emperor of India in those days like the top of a mountain barren and lofty, producing nothing, feeding nobody, clothing none, and yet high and stately, looking down upon all the world? No! Yudhisthira by his wisdom converted the fearful forest Khandavaprastha into beautiful Indraprastha, filled towns, cities, villages and gave to life all its amenities. The cruel snakes which used to breed there were destroyed, the fearful enemies of mankind were burnt, mountains levelled and great schemes of irrigation and agriculture were introduced and put into operation by him for the good of suffering humanity.

Yudhisthira said: "Uncle! Heaven is my witness! I want you to be happy. My father made you sit on the throne which the laws of the land denied you. I would not be declared and reign as an Emperor of India unless you do so, and it was for that purpose I agreed to your proposal and threw the dice as requested by you. You must satisfy your few days left in this world with joy and happiness. Let you with your sons enjoy

the Empire we built. You will remove the party feelings and combine the two into one and thus make the country and nation strong and powerful. There will be no cause for dissimulation henceforth. This will spare you the annoyance to which you have been so often subjected by your wicked sons and save you from the hands of death through ill health or murder. I will retire to rest as a crowned sovereign; your sons will not be able to dispute my right to the throne. I settled the family quarrel before by accepting the partition and now I have complied with your request once more to make you happy only. I trust that your sons will not betray me in future and that you will see to it." The King shuddered when he heard this, bit his lips and remained quiet.

Yudhisthira continued: "You are elevated and your son's ambition is now fulfilled. Let him not take the trouble of playing this terrible game with you or anybody else. Do not overturn the footstool on which you rose. Give us now permission to take up the forest life with holy men. Bless us that our minds be not contaminated with the thought of vengeance. We will return to take back the Empire after thirteen years."

Dhritarastra stood up and embraced the good Yudhisthira and said loudly: "You are really great, your sincere words bear ample testimony to your pure and excellent disposition. Providence has given you good features, figure, mature age, a wonderful wife and brothers. The very persecutions of your early life have become your triumphant restoration and prosperity. May God make you all happy and prosperous!" The mighty Pandavas bade *adieu* with these words: "What else is there to be done?* You are our father and preceptor, we were always obedient to you and shall ever remain so."

The Emperor Yudhisthira was convinced that his anointment at the Rajasuya sacrifice must be accepted by the blessings of the revered seers and Rajarshis who did not attend the Rajasuya sacrifice. Besides, he realised that the duties of an Emperor entailed preparations, in consultation with those sages and great men of the day, to resuscitate the true religion all over the Empire and to civilize the uneducated dwellers of the forest in the best way possible so that they might be useful members of the society and the realm, instead of being a menace to the dwellers of the forest who practised the Yoga system and Vedic sacrifices, which were fast falling into disuse.

* This clearly conveys the idea of re-arrangement; besides there are other proofs in the texts of the Mahabharata (Shanti Parvan, Chapter CXXV). The re-arrangements referred to were not purely the blessings of imagination, but deductions.

The pledge of redemption of the Empire after thirteen years was the stake at the second dice-play and the grounds for the great fight. It might have been introduced when the great war became the central theme of the Mahabharata; but the central theme of the dramatic Mahabharata is to prove that love is holy, divine and deathless—it is not base desire or abject fear. " Wheresoever a man seeketh himself, there he falleth from love."

The text of the Mahabharata clearly gives out the real intention of the gambling match in the mouth of the old King Dhritarastra, addressing Yudhisthira as follows: " 'It was for meeting with our friends and also for examining the strength and weakness of my children that I allowed this match at dice to proceed. There is no fear for those Kurus who are under your sway and who follow the counsel of the greatly intelligent Vidura, learned in all Shastras. In you virtue is represented, in Arjuna patience, in Bhimasena prowess, and in the twins Nakula and Sahadeva pure reverence and service to superiors. Be blessed, O Ajatasatru! return now to your capital. Let there be brotherly love between you and your cousins. Let your mind be always fixed on virtue.' With these words of farewell the Pandavas with Draupadi left for Indraprastha."* In the circumstances, the exile of the Pandavas by further dice-play cannot but be a myth, as it is contradictory to the text of the Dyuta Parvan hereinbefore quoted. Nor is this all. Again, the object of the Pandavas in retiring to the forest was clearly explained in the Udyoga Parvan in more than one place.

" The Pandavas, O King, having saluted and propitiated you, have sent you this message: 'At your command have we with our followers suffered misery. These twelve years have been spent by us in exile in the forest and the thirteenth year have we spent in each other's company in disguise. Truly believing that our father would not break that pledge of his towards us, did we break, O sire, our own? The Brahmanas who accompanied us know this. Therefore do you abide by your pledge, as we have done by ours, O best of the Bharata race; having long suffered grave troubles, O King, we desire to get the share of our own Kingdom.' "†

" The virtuous King Yudhisthira, now seeing that a slaughter of innocent men was unavoidable, began to sigh repeatedly and said these words to Bhimasena and Vijaya: 'The very thing to avoid which (a war), I went into exile in the forest and

* Sabha Parvan, Chapter LXXIII, Verses 14—15.
† Udyoga Parvan, Chapter XCV, Verses 40—43.

experienced other troubles—that very calamity now overtakes us as if with a set purpose. The result, to which we gave much anxious care, has come as we expected, though we wished it not. Has the mighty Kali come?' "*

Draupadi was brought into the Kuru Court after the dice-play in a manner which was then considered to be an outrage on the prestige of good society and on her honour. It was clearly described by Kunti in the Udyoga Parvan.†

The question of protecting the life, property, social ties and honour of people became the all-important questions of civilisation and the cause of the suppression of the tyrannies of monarchs like Ravana, Jarasandha, Sisupala, Kamsa and Durjodhana; and they were the themes of the Puranas and the two Indian dramatic Epics. Can one force a girl into bigamy against her will? This was the question raised in the abduction of Sita by Ravana and at the dice-play in the Kuru Court where the alleged rumour of the marriage of Draupadi with five husbands was put to the test when she was called upon to accept a sixth one. The man who wielded the broom and bared the national cause by sweeping away shams and abuses was Yudhisthira. He staked his wife at the dice-play without the consent of his brothers and thereby set at rest the doubt concerning Draupadi's five husbands. Yudhisthira did not give any wealth or dowry of kingdom when he married her. He only gave her shelter and the safeguard of the love in his heart and soul. Draupadi was wedded to him, the ideal King of justice and religion, as fast as law and church could make it. Draupadi did not change her national name Panchali or Draupadi by her marriage; and so the honour of the country in which she was born as well as the prestige of her great family were preserved in her names. The memory of the great antagonism between the Kurus and Panchalas was swept away by the marriage and the Pandavas were known and accepted as her protectors in the world outside. She did not deceive any one, but the world was deceived. The wickedness of the Kurus was exposed when her honour, her maiden purity and chastity was established at the dice-play.

* Udyoga Parvan, Chapter CLIV, Verses 19—21.
† Ibid, Chapter CXXXV.

CHAPTER VII.

Praise and Censure.

God, though called upon to help by men and women with tears and prayers, withdraws Himself in clouds of impenetrable silence. God never teaches anyone, nor does He explain the why and wherefore of so much needless distress and agony which exist within his creations. The general complaint is often made that, if God was omnipotent, He could have saved suffering humanity. If human words cannot reach so high, then there must be some way to approach Him. The soul and senses feel the touch of something higher within man's heart which makes it vaster and purer and better than the temples of Gods and Goddesses. The forest where saints and royal recluses lived absorbed in deep meditation and in communion with God above was then considered as heaven on earth. The court life and the works of administration were carried on by the mortal Kings and their ministers. The constant unrelieved consciousness of human wretchedness must have lowered their spiritual state. The Indian Epic demonstrates the higher ideals of an Emperor against a King, wholly depraved, with the selfish ideas of a monarch and with devilish ministers. Yudhisthira, after the dice-play, thought, if God were indeed merciful and full of loving kindness, that He would not and could not bear the constant sad spectacle of his uncle's great injustice to him and to his brothers for the sake of his son. No one ever met such persons like Dhritarastra and Durjodhana and their wicked ministers, so worldly and artful. Yudhisthira was destined for higher ideals of life as an Emperor and he had to prepare himself for it. The world is nothing but a ladder of steps whereby one can ascend to heaven. He does not care if the world cries shame on him, as he is only eager to illumine his heart with the Divine Light, to guide and administer the world with a religion of love. A verse of Browning runs as follows:

"Youth shows but help; trust God; see all, nor be afraid."

Wealth, position and fame can do nothing as they are merely external shows, not lasting long. The recitation of the Mahabharata by the Pouranic Souti took place in the great twelve

years' sacrifice of the famous preceptor, Saunaka; and the newly anointed Emperor Yudhisthira had to engage himself in a twelve years' sacrifice with his wife and brothers, in consultation with the great sages; and practise in seclusion the lessons he would receive there, so very imperative and necessary for the emancipation of the soul. This very Saunaka in the Vana Parvana, Chap. II, enlightened Yudhisthira with the kernel of the Mahabharata and advised him to practise Yoga in the forest in order to attain success in life; and his priest, Dhaumya, initiated him into the worship of the Sun. The Snataka Brahmanas followed Yudhisthira into the woods, but the subjects were admonished not to do so.

The world felt that there must have been something very wrong in the heart of a nation and its representative Kings who allowed without opposition the most cruel persecutions upon the wise Emperor Yudhisthira and his beloved consort and brothers, whom they lately anointed in a religious sacrifice of the Hindus as their Emperor and Empress. A readiness to forgive offences gives proof of one's greatness, while retaliation speaks of anger, hatred and malice. History recorded the greatness of the forgiveness of the great Emperor Augustus Cæsar to Cornelius Cinna, the grandson of Pompey, who was detected in a conspiracy against the life of the Emperor. On the day of trial the Emperor addressed the conspirator:—"Look here! I have twice saved your life, first as an enemy, then as a conspirator, and now I give you the Consulship. Let us then in future be friends and only contend whether I shall be most generous or you most faithful."

What that King Dhritarastra was like, who sent the Pandavas with Draupadi to roam in the forest like so many beasts, could better be imagined than described. The great Emperor Yudhisthira did not desire immediately after his installation ceremony that blood should be shed—the blood of his own family and of the Kings of India. There were few more pitiful episodes in the history of any country which could be compared with the meekness and sufferings of the great Emperor Yudhisthira. He was the most pious and unselfish of Kings—a true example of the Kshatriya Kings of those days. His ways to achieve sure success in the world excited the admiration of all men. The sages, the good minister Vidura, tried their very best to undo the wrong, but in vain. Yudhisthira allowed the wicked doughty Kuru princes, Durjodhana and Dushasana, and their friends to work out their own ruin with

wealth and a kingdom. He was not wrong in his calculation. A strong party was then formed to set right the wrong, and a body of sages visited the Kuru Court for the purpose. When their object was not fulfilled, they not only censured the wicked Durjodhana but cursed the Kurus and their friends with immediate destruction.

All land in ancient India was strictly held upon a military tenure. There was no king or prince who could escape payment of tribute to an Emperor of India. The necessities of their positions obliged them to look upon their properties to be administered in trust for the great sovereign over them. They were thus to a great extent prevented from wasting their fortune and power in self-indulgence in the luxuries of the age. The good Emperor did not like to go into this delicate question himself but left the spade work of improvement in the material world to the efforts of the Kurus, so that they would incur displeasure and discontent. The Kuru princes, under the weak King Dhritarastra, created and fostered a kind of *parvenu* nobility with Karna, Drona, etc., whom the aristocratic nobilities and kings of ancient India could not brook. The great idea of ancient India was that the King must keep money first to pay his tribute as well as other dues for religious sacrifices. The great Emperor Yudhisthira took upon himself the great work of consolidating the empire, in consultation with the retired recluses of the day, with a true belief in the God of Love. Necessarily he had to retire to the forest. The Liberals were the leaders of advanced thought and were the chosen thinkers of the people of India. The Pandavas were not actuated by any ulterior objects of self-aggrandisement in any way. This became quite clear in their retirement from the sphere of the idle pleasure-loving society of aristocrats who lived upon the revenues of the State and usurped the legitimate rights of their neighbours. Yudhisthira sat over them in the great sacrifice and set an example that he prized; that place was not poor which had peace in it; peace is better than the throne of an Emperor. He showed to the world that in all strife and revolution one dissatisfied soul was the root of all troubles, surrounded by all sorts of men suffering from imaginary wrongs, stirred up by inward jealousy and ambition. He satisfied the dissatisfied Durjodhana and his satellites by placing the Empire in the hands of Dhritarastra. He thought that, from actual experience in reigning, they would realise that thrones and kingdoms could not confer peace of mind or happiness of soul. The brilliant, beautiful and accomplished Empress

Draupadi demonstrated the value of character, and the strength of mind, culture and humanity necessary to the woman who was fit to occupy the seat of the Empress of India, as a competent companion and a helpmate.

"Nothing is to man so dear,
As woman's love in good manner.
A good woman is man's bliss,
Where her love right and steadfast is."

—*Robert De Bremne.*

Happy is the man who labours for the particular work, entrusted to his lot, from birth to death. Ruskin said: "Work first, you are God's servants; see first, you are the friends. The King who adorns the throne is a slave of slaves but he who serves God is a King of Kings in perfect freedom." Money-making, power and enjoyments cannot be the be-all and end-all of man's existence. God is the greatest workman, who labours not for His own enjoyment but for the world. The Emperor of India must follow His example and work hard like Him, not for his pleasure but to afford relief and happiness to the world. Yudhisthira showed his wonderful power of self-control in the gambling hall. He remained silent at the sophistic arguments employed there. He never turned his eyes on the beautiful Draupadi, dragged weeping amid cruelly-muttered insults without a word of protest or disdain. The whole exquisite outline of love and beauty from the lightest wave of hair, look, gait and posture, radiating in the noble features of Draupadi, his beloved wife, could not move the great Yudhisthira in any way. It was not a question of the fall of Adam and Eve but of sworn love and obedience to God and of a spirit ready to bear all without question. No fear or dismay could possess him. He grudged no one who wanted to possess his wealth. He pitied the princes and kings who envied him. Happiness does not dwell in worldly possessions but rules supreme in the heart within. All over the world he preached this truth against false enjoyments. The world found in him a spirit which cannot entertain any evil and wants to govern obstinate and unruly passions in others by the patient influence of his own example. The world awakened to the vice, hypocrisy and corruption for which Kings were respected and Kingdoms owned. His one idea was how to lift man from the lower level to the higher ideal. He proved to the world that he who lost his self-control yielded his own sword to his enemy. He placed in their charge Mammon's golden gates of Hell and went himself in search of Heaven. He mocked at the pride

and vanity of throne and power and came to his sylvan home, a spot so sacred and peaceful, where he could meet seers and God. It was a pilgrimage to Heaven from the den of Hell. The world is deceitful and its judgment is terrible. This is the lesson one can read from the actual experience of the lives of all great men of India. It is necessary for a man to withdraw from intercourse with the secular things of the world, if he wants to rise into the regions of a life of immortality. The grand bare brow of Yudhisthira, resplendent with the light of Heaven, shone better than the crowned head of an Emperor, his bare garments to protect his body were nobler than the Imperial purple, the sweat of his body lubricated the very axis of the world, and his sore travail loaded the iron dice of Fate in favour of humanity. The future reaped the heavy grain from the plains which were to be cleared and settled. He recked not so much for the name. The Empress did not disdain to gather fruits and flowers with her own dainty fingers to offer prayers and worship to God for herself or for her husband.

The forest life of Yudhisthira, the Sun worship and the boon he received from the Sun raised the all-important question of agriculture. The worship of the Sun not only raises the question of agriculture but of planetary influence in the fate of man and of civilisation. The Bible says that light was the first creation; and the Sun is the centre of light, rising in the East, as the great poet Milton sings:—

"First in his east the glorious lamp was seen
The Sun's rising in the East points out that
Favoured land where civilisation first grew,
Where the image of God was first seen through
the Light."

Vidura, the most wise minister of the Kurus, in order to excite their sympathy as well as fear, described and explained the manner in which the Pandavas were leaving for the forest. Yudhisthira, deprived of his empire by foul means, bore no ill-will to any one; everyone could judge it by his look and demeanour. The other powerful brothers were not so; they were anxious to wreak vengeance. Dhaumya was singing the Sama hymns. He described the most piteous parting scenes of the Pandavas with their mother: "You all know the household ladies of the Royal Kurus are all very much grieved and disconsolate; at this Kunti has been crying: 'O God! where are You? What have been the faults of these poor creatures that they have been suffering so much? If I had

known before that all these would happen I would not have left the mountains of Satasringa and come to Hastinapur! My life is prolonged only to make me see all these miseries of my good children and of my virtuous and chaste daughter-in-law Draupadi! Death comes to all. Why is it denied to me? O God! O God!' They all embraced each other in piteous tears till I separated them and kept Kunti in my house. Kunti asked Sahadeva to stay with her but even that was not possible. She fell into a swoon."

"Vidura cried out: 'O what hard-hearted cruel creatures you all were; you were not at all moved by these! The spirit of Pandu will not rest in peace, nor will that of the great ancestor who blessed the line with his name. Pray, for God's sake, do not sacrifice that great name which you bore! You all know how the citizens are crying shame on the old King, his ministers and his profligate sons.' They were following the Pandavas who were telling them not to do so. They would not hear and cried out: 'Alas! O Emperor where are you going in this fashion with your virtuous wife and powerful brothers! We shall go where you will go. Is there no God above? Why do events like this happen which make people question Your existence? What an irony of Fate and justice that the good Pandavas should be persecuted and the wicked Kurus should prosper!' The world is filled with folly and sin! God made many a King and a Queen but the great examples of Yudhisthira and Draupadi as the Emperor and Empress of India, anointed the other day only to retire into the forest, being defeated in a deceptive game of dice, are rare enough. Nobody likes to live in this world under the régime of the King who displaced them! The Pandavas were angels, save wings, from Heaven and Draupadi the Goddess of Prosperity! What will become of the Kingdom with their disappearance!"

Vidura finally recited the virtues of the Pandavas and their abilities to win success in life, to convince the Kurus that it would be quite useless for them to follow the advice of Sakuni and Karna to destroy the Pandavas in the forest. "You all know very well that no one can overcome Yudhisthira either in virtue, wisdom, knowledge or good conduct. Bhima is simply invincible in strength and power, Arjuna is so in skill and archery, Nakula is the master of political economy and finance, Sahadeva is famous for his administrative capacities, the virtuous Draupadi is learned in Dharma and Artha, and their priest, Dhaumya, is the best of all learned men well versed in the Vedas. They were all instructed by Vyasa, Asita,

Bhrigu and other celebrated sages of the day." But these words did not have the desired effect.

The wise Vidura at last, quite baffled in all his attempts to excite sympathy for the poor Pandavas, could not help speaking out his mind to the old Dhritarastra: "There are men who find delight in killing everything beautiful in Nature's garden to bring home as trophies from hunting expeditions. The act of killing a beautiful and harmless creature creates a sort of pleasure and vanity and becomes a second nature. He is a hero of the age and a King, and the aristocracy must bear him on their shoulders. The just Emperor of India must vacate his seat for such a profligate prince like Durjodhana. This is the sign of the Dark Age or Kali Yuga and Durjodhana who won the Empire by the stake of the dice is the great incarnation of it. Let this be the proclamation of his accession to the throne."

The old King Dhritarastra and his son could not bear all this and called upon Vidura to retire. Durjodhana openly told his father: "If I ever see the sons of Pandu return to the Kingdom, I shall not live." The sages headed by Narada, Vyasa and Maitreya advised the old King and his son not to take undue advantage of Yudhisthira's generous conduct and that they should be friends with the Pandavas. Durjodhana disregarded the good advice of the sage Maitreya who said: "Fool! you are all relying on warriors who are all old, verging on death; but remember they will not be able to fight the Pandavas. Let there be peace between the Pandavas and the Kurus." The learned sage left his seat and cursed Durjodhana: "Dare you slight my words by slapping your thigh? Bhima shall smash it with his club in the fight with you."

The old King entreated the sage to withdraw his curse. The sage left the Court saying that, if they would follow his advice, then, and only then, would the curse be ineffective but otherwise not. At last when every effort to make peace between the Kurus and the Pandavas by the great sages had proved abortive, the Kurus heard the fateful words of Narada: "The Kurus will be destroyed in the fourteenth year for the fault of Durjodhana."

The news spread like wildfire and Hindu society was moved to great sympathy. The evil omens made them dumb with fear when the good Gandhari, the mother of Durjodhana, appeared in the Kuru Court. Gandhari, the most devoted wife of Dhritarastra, took her husband to task for having lionised their worthless son Durjodhana, for having made enemies of the powerful Pandavas and exiled Vidura, the most experienced

minister, to join them to bring about the ruin of their children and the Kingdom. She entreated her husband to do what the great sages advised and make peace with the Pandavas by all means, following the good advice of the wise Vidura. "You all must have heard of the great feats of Bhima in killing the fearful cannibal, the most powerful Kirmira, who made depredations on the fearful residents of the hermitages and of the villages on the outskirts of the Kamyaka forest. He was the brother of Baka and friend of Hidimba, whom Bhima had already killed. The Pandavas earned the great blessings of the sages there, as well as of the inhabitants who provided them with all the necessities of life. Yudhisthira, in many ways, was one of the most exemplary characters of our family, and his wife and brothers with the mother were no less conspicuous. Yudhisthira and his devoted brothers lived the lives of martyrs by choice, when the sentiment of Self was uppermost in the Kuru Court and elsewhere. Was it not very wonderful that Yudhisthira who ascended the throne as an Emperor of India would agree so easily to give up the Empire he had built with so much labour and energy? The Pandavas were possessed of wonderful parts from their childhood and youth. They were tireless travellers of dauntless courage and enterprise, ever ready to face the most bewildering problems before them wherever they went. Yudhisthira was anxious to enter into the details of all the annoyances and griefs which his poor fellow mortals suffered, alone and undefended in the forest for the propagation of religion and self-culture. They were the sages and their attendants in the forest, who were Brahmans. Confusion and distress were removed by the abdication of power to one authority, who was the prime mover in the founding of the new Empire. The absence of hostilities from enemies fostered community discipline. This making of a nation was the great task before the Pandavas and Sri Krishna and the party which they formed and led. We ought to be proud of them. To shun delights and live laborious days was their great motto. The Pandavas, Sri Krishna and their families, the great Panchalas, etc., were all great allies in this work." Gandhari in great grief at the sad decision cried out: "O God! If my husband had heard the good advice of Vidura and deserted Durjodhana who, when he was born, cried like a jackal, then the present calamity would not have arisen! Do not cause the fearful destruction of the great race of the Kurus. Follow the advice of the disinterested sages who visited the Kuru Court and left, insulted by our wicked sons

and their bad advisers. Prosperity, acquired by wicked acts, is soon destroyed but what is won by honest means takes root and remains intact from generation to generation. Do not err in your great duty." The old King Dhritarastra disregarded the good advice of his good and great wife as he was a great believer in destiny.* The wicked King only followed her advice so far as the bringing back of Vidura into the Kingdom was concerned. Sanjaya was sent for the purpose.

The Pandavas went to the forest on the advice of the great Yudhisthira† to save their virtue and to practise Brahmacharya. The original texts of the Mahabharata (Vana Parvana, Chapter XXIII, verses 13-14) bear out that Yudhisthira went to the forest on a pilgrimage of success: "O good citizens," cried out Arjuna, "the Emperor Yudhisthira intends taking away the fame of his enemies by living in the forest. There you can go to the great ascetics separately, each taking with you at your head the learned Brahmans and praying for their grace and representing to them what is necessary for your supreme good." The mere performance of the time-honoured sacrifice of Rajasuya or the formal tributes of Kings could not make him really Emperor. This was the pilgrimage of success which a good Emperor like Yudhisthira undertook for thirteen years of continual labour—to come out quite transformed at the end, as a victorious angel of Heaven. Narada, in the person of a divine angel, appeared in the Kuru Court and communicated the divine purpose of destroying them for their wickedness.

The peaceful minstrels, like Narada, sages, scholars as well as demoniac characters as Agastya and Durbasa threw light by the powers of speech on the violent and terrible irruptions and fierce invasions of countries with sword and fire by Kings and Conquerors of various ages. It is believed that God visits earth through righteousness which is the absolute quality reflected in human beings. Righteousness was to love, help and suffer if need be for those who were ignorant and knew not what they were doing. The ideal man or woman will devote his or her life for the benefit of humanity rather than for any personal benefit. Poor Durjodhana! He sought everything for his own personal benefit and he thought himself the luckiest man in the world to secure in a moment by a game of dice the Empire which it had taken the Pandavas years of hard labour to win.

*Chapter LXXV.

† Chapter LXXX, Verses 40—41.

Chapter VIII.

Forest Life.

The scenes of Heaven are reflected in forest life in the well-known Indian Epics. If there be Heaven on Earth, it is there where peace of mind can be enjoyed. Humanity is made noble when it is trained in the way of perfection by the sufferings of self-denial and sacrifice. Vyasa, Nimi, Saunaka, etc., were the founders of great universities in the forests of India and their disciples adopted their names with pride. The majestic souls of the revered sages in the midst of serene sceneries fill every soul with noble sentiments when coming into contact with them. Their hermitages were in beautiful places where the solemn silence was broken now and again with Vedic chants, the sweet singing of birds and the rhythmic calls of animals. The trees were large, bright with coloured leaves, fruits and flowers, and adorned with several birds of different colours, enjoying the cool breezes and tasting the fruits at their will. The leaves of the trees are said to absorb all the obnoxious qualities of the air and the great spirits who rule the ancient and hereditary groves elevate by their instruction and banish all sordid desires. There was nothing more loathsome than prowess and avarice allied. Nature teaches beasts to know their friends, which men seldom realise even from experience. The amity that wisdom needs folly easily unties. Kings deal out gifts expecting in return twenty for their one; they know how to make money and support themselves and make the world prosperous. Their kindness is subtle. He who can keep his wealth can protect the prestige of his house. Ingratitude makes living man look worse than a dying man. What the wealth of Kings and Emperors could do when there was such a keen rivalry for the fruits of selfish ambition; when the ruler of the Kingdom or Empire, for his own children, resorted to all sorts of vicious means! Wealth was the fruit of intelligence and genius of chivalry, but when it descended from a son to a father it was a gift not earned. It became the bone of contention amongst the heirs; and this theme formed the prologue of the dramatic Mahabharata in the story of Supratika and Vibhavasu who, transformed into an elephant and

a tortoise, died fighting. They were transformed by curses into animals which betray a bitterness of heart in even more terrible ways than are within the powers of men. Yudhisthira abandoned riches, wealth and Empire, amassed by his exertions with the chivalry of his brothers, to relieve the sorrows and grievances of his blind uncle Dhritarastra and his children, and retired into the forest for peace. But alas! the latter were more miserable than before. The Pandavas, however, were in a better atmosphere there than at the Court. They mixed with people who loved them and initiated them into the essence of religion and knowledge.

Sun worship dates from Vedic times and the Brahmanas even now follow it in their daily worship called Gayatri. The Mahabharata owes its existence to the Bharata-Savitri, which was amplified by Saunaka and given to Yudhisthira in the forest. Yudhisthira followed the advice of his priest Dhaumya, and he carried out the daily worship of the Sun to become successful in life. It was not in the nature of Yudhisthira to expect anything from the Kuru Court for his own support or for his dependants. The hymn to the Sun and the boon of a plate to Yudhisthira illustrated nothing; but he utilised the agricultural and mineral wealth of the forest to the best use. The Brahmans who retired from city life cultivated their head and heart. The Indian Epics, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata represented that the heroes of the age from the Kshatriya race removed the powerful tyrants and brought their families and clans within the pale of civilisation by inter-marriages. Bhima married Hidimba, the sister of the great cannibal chief, and their issue was the famous Ghatatkatcha; and Arjuna married the princess of the Nagas and she gave birth to the equally famous hero, Vabhruvahana. The Sun whom Yudhisthira praised and worshipped was described as the great benefactor of mankind and very helpful in the performance of Vedic sacrifices. It was not a worship of the planetary system. The Rig Veda deified day and night as twin brothers who had been nursed on the bosom of Aditi (the sky or heaven) who is said to have been the mother of the gods. The horse represents the Sun deified and the two sticks whose rubbing produces fire were called Varuna and Mitra. This was the poetical conception, so closely allied to science, and rich in moral lessons. The Mahabharata does not present either of these. The religious sacrifices of Rajasuya and Asvamedha, representing a great display of the arrogant wealth and power of Brahmanism to

support the Vedic performance, were more or less different kinds of political institutions rather than spiritual ones. The Pouranic poets in their zeal bring Gods on earth who were found wanting in self-control or were required by their power to deliver the country from the hands of very powerful tyrants of the age. The chief characteristic of a devil is his unconquerable hatred of good men. He loves such men as will burn, rob or slay any man to please evil propensities at the expense of suffering humanity. They were the faithful dogs who lackeyed the royal court. No one who has a real heart and soul alive within him can join such a party for the sake of the loaves and fishes of royal favour. Poor creatures, they knew not what they were doing except to please the man in power. Drona, Karna, Bhisma, Kripa and Asvathama formed such a party. Yudhisthira stood against them. What he had acquired was fully utilised to remedy this state of things for the good of the world and not for his personal aggrandisement. It was for this he was acknowledged as the just Emperor of India and a new era dates from his reign. In the Kamyaka forest, on the bank of the river Saraswati, the great sage Saunaka recited the amplified Bharata-Savitri.

The Ramayana and the Mahabharata are the two Indian Epics which betray close inter-connection in the events of forest life. Jayadratha, brother-in-law of Durjodhana, a King of the province of the Punjab, while the Pandavas were absent, tried to carry off Draupadi, just as Ravana attempted to abduct Sita. The worship of Siva and his defeat of Arjuna in a fight form part of one of the important events of the forest life; and Jayadratha, grossly insulted for his attempt at abduction, worshipped Siva and was the cause of Abhimanyu's death by Siva's boon. Siva's boon to Draupadi in her former life was the cause of the false report of her five husbands, it is said in the Puranas. All these tell a tale of interpolations in a later age. Many Pouranic stories as well as the fanciful conceptions of great Indian poets like Magha and Bharavi, found easy access into the Vana Parvana.

Yajnavalkya was identified with the Satapatha Brahmana and its " deluge " version is mentioned in the Vana Parvana, where Manu was represented as the Hindu Noah. He was a worshipper of the Sun and became the author of the White Yajus. The fight between the uncle and nephew is mentioned in the Santi Parvana which indirectly refers to their productions of the Black and White Yajus, and in the Astika Parvan where

the colour of the famous Airavata's tail is the subject of dispute amongst the wives of Kasyapa, the great priest of the day.

Yudhisthira was the typical ancestor of the Kshatriya race who, under the guidance of Sri Krishna, illustrious sages and the Brahmanas of the age, rescued India from the tyrannies of the degraded Kshatriya Kings. The story of Yudhisthira was utilised in the religious lore of a nation that migrated from India. He may be compared to Abraham, the father of the Israelites, the peaceful traders of India. During Abraham's life there were no less than ten temptations. Abraham's departure from Haran was the result of religious considerations of pilgrimage. Traditions subsequent to the Jehovistic age say that he was driven out by the idolatrous Chaldeans on account of his monotheistic doctrine and then dwelt with the King of Damascus. The worship of Sri Krishna on the principle of monotheistic doctrine at the great sacrifice of Rajasuya brought about the death of Sisupala, who was the leader of a party against Yudhisthira. Sisupala's follower, Durjodhana, came into power after the dice-play and was instrumental in bringing about the exile of Yudhisthira and his brothers to the forest. Drona was identified as the great protector of Durjodhana, who openly said: "The sons of Dhritarastra sought my protection, I would look after them to the best of my power."* Drona did not follow the duties of a Brahman.† He became the stake in a game of dice in the great battle of Kurukshettra.‡

It cannot be overlooked that the poetic imagination of Indian writers accuses the planets, Sun and Moon, and makes them the great progenitors of many well-known Kshatriya Kings. The basest conduct to which humanity was liable, according to the vitiated taste of the royal court, was not spared to cry down the great men and women of the day whom the inferior princes envied. *Shakespeare sings*:

"For who hates honour hates the God above.
Opinion's but a fool, that makes us scan
The outward habit by the inward man."

The Kurus hesitated not to cast aspersions on the Sun, Air, Yama and Indra whom they alleged to be connected with the births of the great heroes of the dramatic Mahabharata (which cannot but be the mere subject matter of imagination). The Pandavas, under the direction of their elder brother, left the Kuru Court where life was full of formalities, full of slander

* Sava Parvana, Chapter LXXX, Verses 38—39.
† Drona Parvana, Chapter XCVIII, Verses 24—25.
‡ Ibid, Chapter XXXI, Verses 6—7.

and deceptions. They stood exalted to remind the world that there was something true and really high, more valuable than wealth and enjoyment, in the wilderness where the wild men and beasts could be their sincere friends.

"Gods, what lies I have heard!
Our courtiers say all's savage but at Court;
Experience, Oh, thou disprov'st report!
The imperious seas breed monsters; for the dish
Poor tributary rivers as sweet fish." *Shakespeare.*

When Yudhisthira had failed to convert his uncle and his sons into well-wishers and friends, he went into the forest with his wife and brothers, acting on the principle that it is better to serve in Heaven than to rule in Hell. The paternal, as well as self-acquired wealth and Empire, were placed at their disposal for over a period of twelve years for the purpose of securing peace and preventing bloodshed, yet the malice and envy of the Kurus and their powerful allies was not set at rest. Yudhisthira praised the sages Vasistha, Vyasa, Suka, Narada, Lomasha, Maitreya and others. He considered Markendeya to be the best of his time for immortality and incomparable virtue.† Markendeya was the author of a Purana in which the Goddesses Chandi and Durga were worshipped for success in life. Yudhisthira and Arjuna were great worshippers of Durga, Yudhisthira worshipping her before entering the territory of Birata, King of Matsya, and Arjuna before the great battle of Kurukshettra.

Astrology and astronomy were regarded as the most ancient sciences of India. The travellers and mariners traced their courses and the shepherds and husbandmen regulated their labours by the constellations and seasons of the year. Astrology ascertains the motions of heavenly bodies and the eclipses of the Sun and the Moon. The Indo-Aryans pictured the storm among the clouds in the lively image of a bull among cows, who were regarded as celestial animals. Vyasa related the story of Surabhi, the mother of cows and bulls, before the old King Dhritarastra in order to point the moral of her affection for children. Vyasa made a significant hint to Dhritarastra that even the mother of a beast pleaded for the lean bulls, who were being persecuted by the cultivators, to God Indra who punished them for such treatment by heavy showers of rain and floods. He called upon the old King to do justice to the Pandavas instead

* Cymbeline, Act IV, Sc. II.
† Vana Parvan, Chapter XXXI, Verses 11—12.

of doing everything for his own children and persecuting them. The gist of Yudhisthira's Sun worship may be summarised in Sir Isaac Newton's words:—

"This beautiful system of Sun, planets and comets can have its origin in no other way than by the purpose and commands of an intelligent and powerful Being. He governs all things, not as sovereign of this world, but as the Lord of the Universe. He is not only God but Lord or Governor. We know Him only by His properties and attributes, by the wise and admirable structure of things around us. We admire Him on account of His perfections—we venerate and worship Him on account of His Government."

Yudhisthira did not ascribe his misfortune to Fate or astral influences but to certain specific causes which are very important. He said: "The Kings and the rulers whom we conquered became our great enemies and have gone over to the Kurus." Bhima, Drona, Kripa and Karna were ready to pay off their debts for all the royal favours they had received from the Kuru Court. It was evident from their attitude in the incidents at the gambling match. Silence is the eternal duty of a wise man. He who can hold his tongue is a general—that is, he can control the six great passions in him. Yudhisthira behaved as a wise man at the time of the gambling match when all sorts of gross insults were ruthlessly levelled against him, his beloved and pious wife and his family.

At the end of the Vana Parvana is recited the important dialogue which refers to the Sun and its great relationship with God, Virtue and Truth. It is the work of God which makes the Sun rise daily and Virtue makes the Sun set; the midday Sun sheds the light of truth and pure knowledge. The soul is established on truth or pure knowledge. The knowledge of self and self-restraint exalt the unpurified soul. Death is a human attribute and slander is impiety. The refusal of protection in the case of Kshatriyas is impiety. One becomes wise by serving the old. These are the great maxims with which Virtue, in the guise of Yaksha, rewarded Yudhisthira; a boon was also given amongst other answers to his questions.

The discourse between Sanjaya and King Dhritarastra begins in the Udyoga Parvana*, and is perhaps the introduction of the deification of Sri Krishna, explaining the blindness of the old King Dhritarastra through his want of faith in Sri Krishna as God. Sri Krishna is described by Sanjaya as God to relieve

* Chapter LXIX.

the grief of the old King and to support the theory of Fate and time which preside over the destiny of men and their affairs.

This was clearly mentioned in the table of contents of the Mahabharata. The praise of God in a paradise in which reverence reaches its highest pitch is very hard to realise! Love is the splendid gift of God to mankind which widens the soul in ever-increasing circles of friendship within society and enables it to realise the great relationship of the creation of mankind with the ever-expanding circles of the glory of God. Love palpitates in the air in the sweet fragrance of flowers and struggles for utterance in the jubilant throats of birds—not to speak of the whispers of bees and the rustling of leaves and the joy in listening to the passionate dash of waterfalls and the murmurs of streamlets. It is high ecstasy to sight the smiling rising Sun in the morning and sad depression to watch the faint crimson of the setting Sun in the evening; and to hear the morning and evening prayers to God and the music of hymns, prepared by His great angels and prophets of religion, is indeed to hear the message of love. God made man after Him, in form quite fit to grasp the prize of immortality; and the great poets sang the names of men and women who were immortalised through Divine Love. The love that rules in Heaven is an eternity! God blessed mankind with a heart and brain of intelligence, and, last but not least, a soul immortal to realise the great Maker and to approach Him with inexpressible devotion, absolute purity and sincere simplicity.

The forest life of the Pandavas, as described in the Mahabharata, demonstrates that youth, glowing with tender passion of doubts and high ambition, selfish and jealous, can never realise what is true love in its noblest and purest form as a life, delicate, God-fearing and half broken by cruel Fate, can do. A soul full of sweetness, purity and honesty carries to God its hope of Heaven and realisation of Divine Love.

Members of the solar and lunar races of the Kings of India were important personages in the history of India and their heroes and heroines formed the subject matter of the Indian Epics. The great incarnation of the age, Balarama, appeared before the world with a plough on his shoulder, as the great weapon of prosperity, and killed the enemies of humanity. Sita and Draupadi, the two heroines of the two dramatic epics, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, came out of the furrowed field and from the sacrificial fire respectively, just to introduce

the use of fire, of corn and cooked food into human civilisation and domestic life instead of the former diet of raw meat and fruits.

The Mahabharata described the defeat of Indra in the clearing of the great forest of Khandavaprastha, which actually meant nothing else but the use of firearms against the hurling of thunder by Indra at the rainy season. The great Vedic God Indra was worshipped for rains to assist cultivation. The building of the great capital of India, Indraprastha, heralded the glory of Sri Krishna and the Pandavas. The roads of civilisation were made within the consumed forest. There stood a man in the forest, a King of Kings, Yudhisthira, who cared more for humanity than for anything else. The country which, when he had travelled before, was forest, was by him converted into agricultural fields with happy peasants, warriors and traders. The very powerful cannibals who used to persecute the weak inhabitants of the forest were converted into peaceful citizens or warriors after their chiefs had been killed or humbled into submission. The Indians of those days did not suffer from much sickness; they were a hard, stout and athletic race, ever mindful of agriculture, trade and labour. The worship of the Sun by Yudhisthira conveys another important fact, *viz.*, that the crops of the winter season, like pulses and cereals, were innovations dating from the long sojourn of Yudhisthira in the forest. The places Yudhisthira visited were forests, but were converted during his time into growing towns and villages where new forms of cultivation and new crops were to be found. This improved agriculture materially improved the status of the inhabitants, their prospects of life, and the value of their land. The material, religious and the spiritual advancement of India dates back from the time of Yudhisthira. Ploughing, digging with spades by manual labour, and systems of irrigation seemed to have been introduced by Yudhisthira in the forest. The earth was relieved from supplying nourishment to useless plants, and the nourishment of the earth was utilised in the production of valuable corns. This was an economic solution to the problems of the age for which the names of the Pandavas and Sri Krishna were idolised. The bell round the necks of cattle in order to find them out in woods, the plough on the shoulder of a bullock, marking the field with furrows, and the sowing of seeds of corn in the correct seasons are the distinguishing marks of the worship of the Sun.

Vidura went to the Pandavas, who were then practising Yoga

in the Kamyaka forest, and related what had taken place at Hastinapur since they left that place. The wicked Karna was bent upon destroying the Pandavas by force of arms, but at the intervention and warning of Vyasa his scheme failed. Vyasa clearly told the old King Dhritarastra that if Durjodhana would indulge in it, then he would be killed with his friends in his mad attempt. He should be exiled and be made to live with the Pandavas in the forest and be taught to make friends with them, if the old King really wanted to avert the extermination of his family. Dhritarastra pleaded his weakness and asked the illustrious Vyasa to take such steps as he thought fit. Vyasa, instead of doing this himself, called upon the sage Maitreya to do so. The wicked Durjodhana did not listen to his good advice and was cursed by Maitreya who revealed how he would meet with his death at the hands of Bhima, which would fulfil the vow of vengeance which Bhima made at the dice hall. He related the curse of Parasurama on Karna for his misconduct in representing himself as a Brahman in order to learn the use of celestial weapons from him and how he, too, would meet his end in the great war. Dhritarastra, being convinced of his great folly in dismissing Vidura from his Court as his minister, sent Sanjaya to bring him back. Sanjaya found Vidura with the Pandavas at Kamyaka forest and pleaded for his return on the ground of Dhritarastra's great grief at his separation from him. Vidura was obliged to comply with the request of the old King, but his return to Hastinapur was a death-blow to the great projects and aspirations of Durjodhana and his friends. Dhritarastra was much relieved when Vidura returned from the Pandavas, as they would not have the benefit of his ripe counsel and far-seeing wisdom. Vidura paid the highest compliment to Yudhisthira's great wisdom, forethought and statesmanship for his retirement to the forest instead of remaining at the helm of his Empire. Vidura's departure from Kamyaka forest was not regretted by the Pandavas. They wished their mother to be protected by the pious and wise Vidura in their absence. It was for this reason that the Pandavas had left their mother, Kunti, at the residence of Vidura and under the care of his family. The Pandavas heard from Vidura all about their mother and Vidura on his return communicated everything about the welfare of the Pandavas to Kunti. The dismissal and recall of Vidura seemed to have been events of great importance and quite providential.

Chapter IX.

Cause of Fights in Ancient India.

The great Indian Epic recites the virtues of good Kings and the vices of usurpers or tyrants. Sri Krishna killed Kamsa and placed his father Ugrasena on the throne. Sri Krishna did not take the crown himself, though it was offered, but simply removed the wicked usurper. He was instrumental in killing Jarasandha without any loss of life. Similarly Hansa and Dimvaka were made to commit suicide. Sisupala was killed at the great crowning ceremony of the Emperor Yudhisthira at Indraprastha. Sri Krishna went to the King of Anarthas to punish Sailya, who laid siege to Dwarka and made depredations there when the heroes of the Vrishni race were away at Yudhisthira's Rajasuya sacrifice. Sri Krishna, returning to Dwarka after killing Sailya, heard from Yuyudhana all about the gambling match at the Kuru Court and the retirement of the Pandavas into the forest. He thought of visiting them there to hold a council with the Bhojas, Vrishnis, Andhakas, Panchalas, Chedis and Kaikeyas to decide upon a line of action for the Pandavas. The Kings of these places, their friends and relatives, gathered a strong force in the forest. The swift march of events in ancient India was of overwhelming interest and that formed the subject matter of discussion in the great assembly of Kings. The divine love of Sri Krishna seemed to be able to make all streams converge to one centre. His great weapon, the celebrated discus, formed their main might. He was not an advocate of the doctrine of "an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth," but was out to punish him who breaks the laws made for the security of the empire and for the happiness of all. The human body is the prison of the soul; the senses revel in its darkness which conceals the activities of the soul. Loving, in spite of hatred and ill-treatment, is something noble and divine, and spiritual love is the highest conception imaginable. To be a mere receptacle of love is not the conception of spiritual love. It is not like the Dead Sea, full of salt which none can use—love must give, its language is international. Spiritual love is the religion of personal and social obliga-

tion with which Sri Krishna was identified. A universality of sympathy, not in any way selfish, is the sign of divinity on earth. Human love smacks of sentiments and companionship with the expectation of return benefits, but a stranger's gift without any return is higher than human love, it is true charity. Divine Love is forgiveness to all, with which Yudhisthira is identified. God is love when it is spiritual; God the Holy Son is Divine Love, and God the Holy Ghost is Charity. No country can be considered great unless its people can realise the relationship of love with religion and its sphere of action in society. Different states in different countries are mere survivals of the traditional system of autocratic rule. Nothing can be more significant in measuring the progress of these Indian states than the reception of the efforts of an Emperor to establish a model Government for a united "greater India." The actual incidents in the lives of the Kings and the Emperor of India, which bear out the laws of the Manu Samhita or the basic principles of a philosophy like the Vedanta, are better than mere precepts in their impression upon the imagination of intelligent people. The meeting of the Kings of different states at the secret conclave, with the builder of Dwarka at their head, who was the King and Emperor-maker of India, could not but be an event of very great political importance.

A King, who watches the interests of his Kingdom and its inhabitants in the spirit of a ministering angel, is really worthy of that name. Universal good-will is in every bosom and this can only be responded to in all its various effects and manifestations if it is shown with all sincerity. He who wages bloody war and sheds blood like water out of impious motives, is a cruel tyrant. The manufacture of lies, ill-feeling and slander was in progress in the Kuru Court. Love of gain had been a powerful factor in forming the habit of lying. The gross lies, which covetousness frames to carry on a trade or profession in the business world, are well known. Malice forges lies and broadcasts them for purposes of slander. False opinions and rumours issue from vanity and malice. How many invent incidents and circumstances which never existed to embellish narratives, with the main object of displaying their own importance? Infamy itself often stands forth a candidate for false praise. There is a saying that one is in better company with a faithful dog than with a man whom one cannot understand. He who cannot rule the hearts of men by justice and honesty is nothing less than a tyrant. To kill such a tyrant was the paramount duty enjoined on a pious Emperor. This was the

programme of action put forward in the great assembly of Kings by their spokesman Sri Krishna (in the Pouranic fashion, with an ode of worship to Sri Krishna by Arjuna and Draupadi, ending with the assurance of success in the punishment of the great tyrants of the age in the drama of the famous war of Kurukshettra). How the law was violated by the Kurus in wresting the throne from Yudhisthira was first discussed in the assembly of Kings. A King administers law and justice and thus becomes the father of peace and joy. A just man is under no obligation to anybody. Justice offers nothing but what may be accepted with honour. God is not a God of the dead but of the living. Happy is the country where truth and mercy meet together, righteousness and peace embrace each other; there patriotism is sustained and sanctified by piety, there authority respects the rights and freedom of people and guards them. Those who rule and those who are ruled are then bound by the ties of an affection sincere and earnest. They become friends of order, peace, moderation and equity. They gladly bear with patience the burden which the exigencies of the State impose and discharge their duties with energy and alacrity when a crisis demands it. Truth, justice, humanity and benevolence are the guiding stars of a patriot. Patriotism is evinced by firmness and consistency in opposing corruption in every form, by a readiness to make sacrifices for the general good, by a patient perseverence in opinions and measures which are right in themselves and likely to be ultimately useful, though the same may not be in accordance with the popular cry. The patriot must stand manfully against all existing abuses and must guard conscientiously the fundamental principles of a constitution from all sorts of violence and injury. The patriot has to deny himself the gratification of his senses when it is inconsistent with virtue and piety. He is a patriot who can forego public honours for the sake of private usefulness to the country and the people at large. He should not play to the gallery for cheers. He who does evil is blind; his conduct proves that he mistakes his own nature; he is ignorant of what is due from himself and others and cannot be the King of the country. He differs in nothing from brutes; he cannot see that his vices lead to his own destruction. He does not know and appreciate the inestimable advantages of society and the means to render it agreeable and useful to all. Philosophy is the source of wisdom, the handmaid of religion and the origin of many comforts. Philosophy is the sweet milk of adversity; for it dissipates man's own cares and miseries

to compare his grief with those of others more miserable than himself.

Everyone knows the littleness of worldly ambition; conquests and defeats are like the clouds which fly across the sky and then disappear. The idolatrous worship of monarchs in ancient India was well known; but nothing was so graceful and gladdening to the heart of an Emperor than the tribute of love of so many intelligent good Kings, with Sri Krishna at their head, and of the religious sages in the forest. There is one thing worth living or dying for—that is love, pure and divine. God is the centre of that love which Sri Krishna represented in the Mahabharata. Yudhisthira did not come to rule the Empire for his sordid personal gains or earthly ambitions of fame, but for the general welfare of suffering humanity and for the emancipation of the soul. Earth received its name from its first ruler, Prithu, who was placed on his father's throne by the great sages of the day who had killed the arbitrary King Vena. The Mahabharata (in Vana Parvana, Chapter CLXXXV) elucidates the great question of a King's duties while he is presiding over the destinies of mankind, and it was also the subject matter of discussion in the great horse sacrifice of Vaniya Prithu amongst such well-known sages as Atri, Kasyapa, Goutama and Markendeya. Goutama was the leader of a party who opposed that King and held that he should not be so, whereas Atri was against Goutama; the great sage Sanatkumar decided in favour of Atri, who was rewarded with large presents by the King. The important decision was based on good grounds, which are given below:—"A King is the ruler of everyone's destiny; for the sages, afraid of committing sins, made over the temporal power to the Kshatriya King. A King like the Sun eradicates sin from the earth. He is the prime cause of social order, the conqueror of battles, the preserver of peace, the watchman, the guide to heaven and the introducer of religion. His wrath is effective, like that of Vishnu, and is capable of securing victory easily. As the fire, when united with the wind, burns down great forests, so when a Brahman's energy co-operates with Kshatriya power it consumes all enemies of the earth." There was no caste distinction and the Brahmans and Kshatriyas inter-married. Marutta's daughter was married to the sage Samvarta, Chayavana to Sukanya, daughter of King Sarjati, Agastya to Lopamudra, daughter of the King of Vidarbha, Rcika Aurva to Satyabati, daughter of King of Kanyakubja Gadhi, and Apnavana to Ruci, daughter of King Nahusa. King Yajati married

the daughter of Sukra. Jamadagni married Renuka, daughter of a King of Ayodhya, and his son Parasurama combined in himself the two characters of a Brahmana and a Kshatriya and was an incarnation of God. The Haihaya King Kartaviryarjuna was a powerful King who was advised in the Mahabharata (Anusasana Parvana) to respect and co-operate with the Brahmanas. His sons killed Jamadagni. Parasurama obtained revenge by killing Kartaviryarjuna and his family, and the Kshatriyas were said to have been swept off the earth. Parasurama conquered the earth and gave it to Kasyapa, who banished Parasurama to the Surparaka country, near Bombay and the sea coast; there is another version that he retired to the Mahendra range in Orissa. Kartaviryarjuna was the first Kshatriya King to stand against the Brahmanas and priests and to destroy them. The Mahabharata contains an allusion to this and to Parasurama, who not only killed the great reformer but tried also to exterminate the Kshatriya race. This was an age of strife, for it was followed by the fight between Vasistha and Visvamitra. Visvamitra was a Kshatriya King and he renounced that order to become a Brahman priest and instructor. He succeeded after a great struggle. He became the priest of the King of Videha and officiated on his behalf in the marriage ceremony of Rama Chandra, and Vasistha also officiated on behalf of Rama Chandra. Rama Chandra was said to have curbed the power of Parasurama materially, when he appeared greatly enraged at the breaking of the bow of Siva, the great God, who was worshipped then. Rama Chandra was the incarnation of Narayana and Narayan worship replaced Siva worship. Rama Chandra was acknowledged as Emperor of India at the horse sacrifice after his great victory over the degenerate Brahmana King and tyrant of Ceylon, Ravana. With Parasurama and Rama Chandra the great question of theocracy in the monarchical form of Government in India arises. The great war of Kurukshettra was waged on religious grounds and in a way in support of theocracy. The verses in the table of contents, which relate to the dramatic Mahabharata, bear this out:—"Durjodhana is a great tree created out of passion; Karna is its trunk; Sakuni is its branches; Dushasana is its fruit and flowers, and weak Dhritarastra is its root. Yudhisthira is a great tree, created out of virtue and religion; Arjuna is its trunk; Bhima is its branches; two sons of Madri are its flowers and fruits; and Krishna, Brahma and the Brahmanas are its roots." Sri Krishna, Brahma and the Brahmanas were the roots of virtue and religion in the "greater India" of those days. Sri

Krishna and Yudhisthira were the human and divine factors in the great ideal of a God and an Emperor of India, allied with the great Brahmana sages of the day, to define the duties of an Emperor and a King and to punish the tyrants of the day.

The exaggeration of the incident in which Draupadi was all but divested of her clothes by Dushasana before her husband and the Kuru Court is the work of the wild imagination of rhapsodists; this can be very well proved by the grievances which Draupadi laid before the great Sri Krishna in the great assembly of Kings, and the words of assurance given in return by him. The same may be summarised from the original texts as follows :—*

"The tears of Panchali, followed by the outpourings of her great grief, sighing frequently as she spoke in anger and in a choked voice before the great Sri Krishna in person, created a scene unparalleled in any drama. 'I laid bear my heart to you on four grounds: (1) relationship (2) respect for a poor aggrieved lady (3) friendship (4) as a saviour of suffering humanity.† It is true that I have parents, husband, brothers, and relations, all very powerful and alive, but they were unable to redress my grievances. Karna's ridicule is simply unbearable —I was seized by the hair in the very sight of the Pandavas and they sat motionless like statues! I was born in the great family of Kshatriyas and was daughter-in-law of the illustrious Pandu, yet such was my fate! Fie on the strength of Bhima and the skill of Arjuna that I witnessed at my Swayamvara marriage when they fought successfully with the assembled Kings. Was it true what I had heard—that Bhima carried on his back all his brothers and his mother when he leapt out of the fire at Baranabata, and that he killed Hidimba and Baka? Could it be true that Durjodhana could not kill Bhima, though he threw him bound hand and foot into the river after poisoning his food? Oh! what lies I heard! That Durjodhana could not kill Bhima, even after inflicting poisonous bites on his body by the most deadly snakes! Is Bhima the man who defeated and killed Jarasandha in single combat? If it is true, where went that much-vaunted supernatural strength and prowess when I was insulted before his eyes at the Kuru Court? Oh! where was the skill of Arjuna in the use of arms which he exhibited in the marriage of his wife Subhadra? Is he the same Arjuna who, I heard, fought successfully with you against the God Indra in the building of Indraprastha? Why did he not

* Chapter XII, Verses 60—121.

‡ Verse 127.

display his skill when I was insulted at the Kuru Court before his eyes? Where is their mother, Kunti, now! Think of her and my wretched condition! But alas! the Kurus, their friends and families are now laughing over my fate and you all have come to see my wretched condition and do nothing! Am I born to die in misery and grief?" Sri Krishna broke the pin-drop silence of the great assembly of Kings, who drooped their heads in great grief and sorrow, with his loud voice:—'O dutiful, pious Draupadi! do not grieve. I shall do whatever lies in my power to redress the wrongs. The wives of those who offended and excited your anger will weep like you on seeing their dead husbands weltering in blood on the battle-field. You shall be the Empress of India again at the horse sacrifice after the great battle of Kurukshettra. The earth might be rent, the waters of the ocean might be dried up or the heavens might fall, but my words shall never be false.' Arjuna pacified Draupadi with the assurance that what Sri Krishna said would surely happen. Her brother, Dhristadyumna, followed saying: 'Be assured that I and my brother Sikhandi will despatch Drona and Bhisma to the other world, Arjuna will kill Karna and Bhima will slay Durjodhana in the great fight.' After this all the heroes turned their faces towards Sri Krishna, who spoke to them: 'O great Yudhisthira! this misfortune would not have overtaken you if I were not then present at Dwarka. I would have come to the gambling match if invited by the Kauravas and would have been able to stop it with the help of Bhisma, Drona, Kripa and Valhika. I would not have missed the opportunity of bringing home to them that the four evils, *viz.*, women, gambling, hunting and drinking, deprive men of their prosperity and property; and would have instanced what had happened in the days of yore to the son of Virasena, regarding the misfortune of gambling. If I could not convince the Kurus of the evils of gambling and its inevitable result, I would have compelled them to desist from it by force.' "

He excused his absence, being called upon to go to the capital of Sailya to punish that prince with death. The sacrifice of Rajasuya was ultimately the cause of his absence for the death of Sisupala was the cause of the rising against him. The gambling match was the result of the Rajasuya sacrifice, to which the cause of the great fight was ascribed in the Harivansa, the sequel of the Mahabharata. This was why King Rama Chandra did not perform the Rajasuya sacrifice, as is clearly stated in the Uttarakanda of the Ramayana. In ancient India to defend the honour of a respected queen was also the cause

of war, for the prestige of the family was concerned. It was the cause of the fight between the great King Rama Chandra and Ravana and in the Mahabharata likewise the insult to Draupadi was just as much the cause of the great war between the two parties. The party which undertook to defend the prestige of the Pandavas and Panchalas was assembled in the great assemblage in the forest where the Pandavas lived, and was presided over by Sri Krishna. When the great sages who had visited the Kuru Court failed in their mission, Sri Krishna formed this large faction to do justice to the great ideal of removing the tyrants and their supporters from the different thrones of India.

Sri Krishna was then worshipped, Arjuna reciting the great deeds which raised him to Godhead; and from Sri Krishna's mouth the previous births of Sri Krishnà and Arjuna were given out as the sages Narayana and Nara. A later edition of the Mahabharata was conceived in which they became the real heroes, which is not consistent with the verses of the prologue recited in the table of contents and quoted before in this chapter.

Satan is identified with revenge in God's creation. Angels are the immortal souls who are set free from the earthly tenements of men below; they realised that the centre of Divine Love was in the everlasting and immortal soul. They submit peacefully to the will of God and know no revenge. Yudhisthira sought the help of these angels while in the woods, placing his mortal frame, family, wealth and properties at the disposal of his enemies to wreak their vengeance; and as a just reward, he saw the divine presence of Sri Krishna whom he neither troubled with complaints nor with demands for revenge. He was only eager that the world should not be deceived; that conscience should be set to work to rescue the soul lost in ignorance. He never pleaded for mercy for those men, armed with weapons, who used them for the chastisement of innocent men and women and whose chief strength was the strength of their great generals and warriors and their great talent for deception and trickery. There is nothing to deplore or regret that circumstances should have made them thus, for everything depends on the culture, education and environment of men. In the Puranas the strife is continually resumed for the recovery of heaven from the hands of the great Asuras by the King of Gods, Indra. Life and strength are not meant for the enjoyment of the senses but to reach heaven and see God there. For this preparation and culture are necessary and so the forest

life of the Pandavas was essential. The life of a human being should be the glory of the great Maker, and not like that of a caged bird, struggling for its freedom or seeking to wreak bitter vengeance on him who imprisoned it in the cage. The time hangs heavily upon such a being, and a dull, vague uncertainty and suspense creates a dread of the future which makes the heart ache and existence miserable. He becomes the slave of self and not the servant of God or Divine Love. He who seeks gratification for his senses does not know what the happiness of Divine Love is. Life becomes a memory of past fleeting joys and not a hope of future happiness. There one seems to dwell in the past rather than live in the present. The world is not interested in the death of such men, even in millions, but their exemplary punishments are the subject matter of the dramas of religion.

The cause of the great battle of Kurukshettra is beautifully described in the Bhagabata Gita. God from Heaven came down to Earth below to perform the glad service of Divine Love, showing the great powers of omnipotence in Virata Murti in the famous battle-field. This is an immaculate conception, one of the most daring flights of poetic imagination that had ever been conceived in any religious book of the world before. Who will doubt the full measure of faith in the worship of Divine Love, who is the only God whom the Pandavas worshipped? The same Sri Krishna visited the Pandavas in the beginning of their forest life, blessing them with assurances of a bright future. No better conception of a God of Divine Love or of an Emperor or an Empress of India was ever conceived than in Sri Krishna, Yudhisthira and Draupadi respectively; their positions in the Valhalla remain as ever unique in the present as in the past.

Chapter X.

Nemesis or Ghosa Jatra.

Yudhisthira with his wife and brothers passed the forest life of 12 years with a view to dispossessing Kali, the Satan of the Dark Age, of his sovereignty over the Earth, in consultation with the great sages and retired kings of the day. The Kurus were led by Durjodhana, who was the personification of Kali or Satan. The good Kings and Queens, the wise lawgivers and ministers were the supreme benefactors of the countries in India, as in every home it is the mother, the father, the wife and the children who are the helpmates of domestic happiness. They helped men and women to bear physical and mental ills with patience and forbearance and taught them lessons of religion to make them insensible to all sorts of miseries. They were the final arbiters of all social reforms to establish peace and harmony in India. Love turns men and women from their savage rudeness to be meek and submissive; it is the language of the great Dame Nature. It is love which makes the savage beasts do everything for their young ones, to feed, protect and look after them. Such love is inborn and divine.

The Ramayana represents the rise of Kshatriya power against the Brahmana supremacy of Parasurama and against Ravana; but the Mahabharata contains every aspect of the multilateral character of Hinduism with illustrations from real life of domestic, social and spiritual upheaval. It is the religious element of the Indian Epics which constitutes one of the principal features of contrast with the Western Epics. Similarly the contrast of heroes in the Ramayana and the Mahabharata are important features of these two Indian Epics. In the Ramayana, Rama Chandra is the Avatara of Narayana, as the Emperor of India of the Ikshakhu dynasty of Kings; but in the Mahabharata, Balarama, who is one of the ten Avataras of the Hindus, is not the hero of the Mahabharata. The five Pandavas had partially divine natures, by turns they became prominent—first Yudhisthira, then Arjuna appears to be the principal character among those that surround the central figure of Sri Krishna, who is identified with God Vishnu.

The Kings and Queens were all anxious to marry their children with a view to ensure the happiness of their countrymen and to protect the country and make it prosperous. The family bond of friendship in a marriage in ancient India was formed on the grounds of State policy and the princes and princesses, respectful and submissive to their parents, were united in the marriage bond either in accordance with their parents' wishes or to show their love for the country to which they belonged, rather than for their own pleasures or for satisfying their ideas of beauty. Marriage was then the strictest of all kinds of friendship between man and woman, nation and nation. There can be no friendship without confidence and no confidence without integrity. The Pandavas were married with such ties of friendship, and their wives and children took farewell of their husbands and with their brothers, parents and relations occasionally visited them in the forest; except Draupadi who gave proof of her piety and virtuous conduct before the world by undertaking strict religious observance in the forest under the guidance of her great husband, Yudhisthira.

A human being is not safe when he is carried away by false hopes and great ambitions—the results of flattery from vain and vulgar associates surrounding him; this was the case with the Kurus, but the moral and spiritual faculties of the Pandavas were of a higher order. They saw the existence of divine love in Sri Krishna and wanted to be blessed with an advancement of reasoning power and of control of the senses which could be achieved through the practice of the Yoga system of philosophy under the instruction of the greatest Yogis of the age who lived in the forest. The ideal Emperor of India then had to undergo a course of lessons at the feet of the illustrious masters in the moral, political and spiritual aspects of civilisation in all their phases.

Things were different with Durjodhana who felt the urge of vanity at having risen to the height of his ambition, not through his own exertions but by the generosity of Yudhisthira who had been tricked by the wicked device of Durjodhana's uncle, Sakuni. This evil disposition had not been taken out of him, though the good minister Vidura and pious sages like Vyasa and Maitreya tried their very best to prevent him from falling headlong down to perdition. Durjodhana and his friends were very eager to see the Pandavas in misery in the forest in order to taunt them with their own prosperity, as shown in the royal accoutrements and equipages. Dhritarastra was at first

unwilling to give them permission to do so, but was eventually prevailed upon to submit to the wishes of his spoilt son. The party of Durjodhana made every arrangement for the forest excursion. Not only did friends and associates go to the forest but the princesses of the royal household were especially taken there to witness the sorry plight of the Pandavas and of the proud Draupadi.

A well-known charming place by the lake in Dvaitavana forest was selected for the royal encampment. Durjodhana, surrounded by the ladies, friends and soldiers, sported in that forest as best he could. Yudhisthira, with his wife Draupadi, was engaged in the sacrifice called Rajasuya according to the injunctions of the Shastra.

It so happened that the followers of Durjodhana after high words came to blows with the Gandharvas in the forest. Eventually battle was joined at the orders of the King of the Gandharvas, Chitrasena, and of Durjodhana. The fight ended in the victory of Chitrasena, and Durjodhana, his brothers, friends and followers were bound in chains as prisoners of war. The followers of the Kurus had no other alternative than to run for help at such an emergency.

The blunt Bhimasena did not lose the opportunity of speaking with petulant sarcasm to the old councillors of Durjodhana who, in great grief, came for help to Yudhisthira. Yudhisthira, the good natured, cautioned Bhimasena that this was not the time to speak thus: "The frightened Kurus who came for help to us should not be insulted. You must not forget that the family honour is at stake—even an ordinary Kshatriya would try his best to protect one who had come to him for help. To rescue Durjodhana, his friends and family, by an act of conciliation, must be tried first; if it is not thus accomplished, then give fight by all means. Follow the Kurus, be all fully armed with Indrasena and other charioteers skilled in arms, rescue Durjodhana and his family and friends from the hands of the Gandharvas." After a brisk fight with the Gandharvas, Bhima and Arjuna found their old friend Chitrasena, the King of the Gandharvas, approaching them—the fighting ended and an exchange of words of friendship took place after the due exchange of friendly enquiries and ceremonies. Chitrasena said: "Durjodhana, a sinful wretch, is always full of vanity. He deserves not to be let off; he deceived and wronged the Emperor Yudhisthira and his wife; he came here to mock and taunt you all. The good Yudhisthira does not know his purpose;

but I leave everything to him, let him do what he likes." He addressed his soldiers as follows:—

"Go and bring Durjodhana in chains with all his counsellors. Protect Dhananjaya (Arjuna) with all his brothers in battle. He is my dear friend and Pandava is also my disciple. At the words of the lord of the celestials, I speedily came here. The wicked wretch is now in chains; I shall go to the abode of the celestials." The Pandavas, having rescued their relatives and the ladies of the royal household and having achieved that great feat, were exceedingly delighted. These illustrious car-warriors, worshipped by the Kurus with their sons and wives, blazed forth in splendour as a fire blazes at a sacrifice. Then Yudhisthira thus spoke out of affection to the liberated Durjodhana in the midst of his brothers: "O child, O descendant of Bharata, never again commit such a rash act. A rash man never becomes happy. O Kuru prince, be blessed with all your brothers. Go back home, as it pleases you, without any despondency or cheerlessness." Having been thus dismissed by the Pandavas, Durjodhana saluted the son of Dharma (Yudhisthira). Overwhelmed with shame, his heart appeared as if rent in two. He mechanically started for his city as one destitute of life. When that Kuru (Durjodhana) had gone away, the son of Kunti, Yudhisthira, was worshipped by the Brahmanas. Surrounded by these great ascetics, he lived in great happiness in that forest of Dvaitavana.

The Pandavas were not in favour of the principle that might is the only right; they stood firmly against it. They were arranging an equilibrium of powers so that no individual state in the future should be in a position to upset the general tranquillity of a country like India, so vast and varied. Diplomacy was not then far developed nor was it inspired by any traditional catch-phrases or watchwords. In the circumstances, "charity begins at home" was put into practice. It became an inevitable development since the Kurus were busy seeking their own welfare and interest, which was not consistent with the good of the common weal or the general interest of the country. It was for this reason that Arjuna openly told their subjects that he and his brothers were going to the forest to bring disgrace to their enemies. Their ultimate object seems to have been the building up of a nobler order of men inspired with the pure ideas of mercy and Divine Love. To settle all the minor details of policy of forming a superior race of men was the great task before the Pandavas. Self-sacrifice, and not self-aggrandise-

ment, was the basis of a party which could make a nation great and noble in the best interests of civilisation.

The Pandavas then saw the great necessity of raising proper soldiers from the devoted and strong savage inhabitants of the wood. They were all submissive and grateful people, stronger and better disciplined than the civilised troops. Their training was put to the test in the fight with the Gandharvas. The troops under the Kurus, including their great commander Karna, fled before the Gandharvas. Durjodhana with his family and friends did not return straightway to the capital. They went in search of their great friend and the army of soldiers who had beaten a precipitate retreat before the Gandharvas.* The meeting and the first exchange of words was very interesting. Durjodhana was heartily congratulated on his great victory by Karna who attributed his flight to that of his soldiers before the better-disciplined and stronger Gandharvas. Durjodhana told Karna that it appeared to him that he did not know what had actually taken place. If Karna had known, he, Durjodhana, would have been greatly offended by his congratulations. He then related how he was defeated and imprisoned with his family; and how he and the others were released and by whom. It was the most severe blow of his life. He would have preferred death to this. How could he return to the capital? How could he show his face before all? He would not do so, and decided to commit suicide by starvation. "What man would cling to this miserable existence? What greater sorrow and disgrace could there be than that I should be offered, as a tribute, bound in chains and in great misery to Yudhisthira by the Gandharva King Chitrasena in the presence of the ladies of our family! Alas! my great enemies and agnates, who were all of late brutally persecuted by me in our court, released us all in a manner which I could not relate to anyone. Oh what a wretch I am! If I had been killed in the battle with the Gandharvas that would have been far better than to be punished with existence—when the remembrance that I owe my life and release to the generosity of my worst enemies is a constant source of misery and pain. Now, degraded from my former exalted position, in which I once trod upon their breasts and placed my foot on their heads, it is impossible for me to show my face in the Kuru Court any more. A man who, led by folly, fell into such distress and suffered great disgrace, must die. What should I say to my father, the King Dhritarastra? How

* Chapter CCXLVIII.

could I describe what had happened to Bhisma, Drona, Kripa Asvathama, Vidura and others to bring disgrace on you, Karna, and others? I should stay here fasting and let all of you go back home. Insulted and disgraced as I am, I should never again return to the city of Hastinapur. I was always respected and feared by my enemies, I always enhanced the respect and prestige of my friends and relatives. How could I now show my face and relate things which would make the heads of my friends and relatives hang down in shame and would enhance the prestige and fame of my enemies? I should never do that, be rest assured.

Durjodhana named before all his successor to the throne, his beloved brother Dushasana, and embraced him: "Go home and rule the earth." Dushasana, choked with tears, fell at the feet of his revered brother and said:—"This must never be. I cannot rule the earth without you." Durjodhana raised his affectionate brother, greatly moved. Karna then addressed Durjodhana as follows:—"You will gain nothing by thus giving way to grief. Do not do anything to give joy to your enemies. What the Pandavas did was nothing else but what they were in duty bound to do as subjects. What is there to be wondered at in their conduct of releasing you from your enemies' hands? If you die in the manner you have resolved to do, you will simply be the laughing stock of the world." The wily Sakuni spoke, seeing Durjodhana firm as a rock in his determination:—"What wise Karna said you must follow. Would you foolishly throw away the great Empire I won for you, without being crowned and without enjoying the fruits of my great labour? You seem to be like the unburnt earthen vessel, incapable of withstanding the rainy days of life. It appears to me that you were not properly instructed by wise elders to do what is right and proper in the circumstances in which you are now placed. Reward the Pandavas and be cheerful. Give the Pandavas back their paternal Kingdom and make them your attached friends. You will thus win virtue and renown. There is nothing to warrant grief and sorrow."

Durjodhana spoke in great sorrow, firmly determined to carry out his intention: "I will have nothing more to do with virtue, wealth, friendship, sovereignty and enjoyments. Leave me alone. Go back to the city and worship my parents, elders and preceptors with due respect." He sat down speechless. All spoke:—"The course you have marked out will be ours. Behold your sad and miserable brother. Be reasonable and sensible. Rise up and let us go to the capital; do not was

your life and energy in great sorrow and despair in this way."

God has not made Heaven or Hell—they are the creations of men. Hindu philosophy assigns them to Maya or illusion. The Bharata Sabitri, the kernel of the Mahabharata, was preached by the illustrious sages to overcome the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune. The Divine minstrel Narada preached it to his father-in-law and to Vyasa to remove their grief. Vasistha wanted to commit suicide by throwing himself in the river bound hand and foot, but was prevented from doing so by the current of the river Vipasa, from which incident its name originated. In the Vana Parvana it is said that Vyasa went to commit suicide on account of his son's separation; the Devas remonstrated with him and he was saved, and the place is called Vyasasthali.*

The Dwaityas and Danavas, the evil spirits, took possession of Durjodhana and made him give up his fast and his resolution to commit suicide. The thought that no dead man can conquer his foes and that it is only he who is alive that can see his ambition fulfilled, struck him then. What is the good of being dead? Therefore grief, fear or death must disappear from the mind of an ambitious man and a hero of chivalry. Durjodhana was elated with the vision of a dream in which his soul and mind represented that of the departed King Naraka, the King of Asuras, whom Sri Krishna killed. Durjodhana returned to the capital of Hastinapur, and was told by Bhisma that it was desirable to make peace with the Pandavas. He had seen with his own eyes the conduct of Karna and the chivalry and heroisms of the Pandavas; but that was in vain. Durjodhana went away with his friends, replying: "What is good for me, what remains to be done, cannot be decided upon all at once." Karna said:—"Pay no heed to what Bhisma said; I shall show you what the poor Pandavas did in the past, I shall conquer the world for you single-handed and have you declared the Emperor of India. I swear by my weapon to do so, if you will only give me your permission. Let wicked Bhisma who blames us and praises the Pandavas witness the truth of my promise."

No Bharata Sabitri was preached before Durjodhana, but it is said in the table of contents of the Mahabharata that Suka, son of Vyasa, preached the Mahabharata amongst the Gandharvas, the Yakshas and the Rakshashas. It is found in the Mahabharata that the Gandharvas were a very powerful clan who overran India in the reign of the King Chitrangada, a son of Santanu

* Vana Parvana, Chapter LXXXVI.

and uncle of Pandu, who was killed by a Gandharva King of the same name.* The Gandharva Chitrasena, who defeated Durjodhana, was met by Arjuna after the Lac House fire, and they entered into a friendship after a chivalrous exchange of arms. The meeting of Karna with Durjodhana took place in Gandhara, an important country comprising the districts of Peshawar and Rawalpindi. It was evidently a corruption of the name of the country of the Gandharvas† Herodotus described the Gandharians as great archers who wore cotton garments. Ptolemy made the Indus the western boundary of Gandhara. The country between the Indus and the Punchkera, the Swat and Hotimardan, was included in it. The Vedas mentioned the Gandharians, and the sons of Bharata, Pushkara and Taksha, after their conquests, named their capitals after their names. Peshawar is the contraction of Pushkarapura and Taxila of Takshasila. Kekayi was the mother of Bharata; she was a princess of that country and was instrumental in obtaining the exile of Rama Chandra and Sita, the hero and heroine respectively of the Ramayana. Likewise, the brother and son of Gandhari were great tyrants of the age and were the chief examples of the warped nature of men of small understanding. They engaged in actions with impure resolves, surrendering themselves to insatiable desires, possessed with vanity, conceit and arrogance, deluded by their evil ideas. They strove to obtain by unlawful means hoards of wealth and a kingdom for their sensual enjoyment. They fell downwards into a foul hell. The three gates of hell are entered by the self-glorifying stubborn spirits, like Karna, the performer of ostentatious lip-sacrifices contrary to scriptural ordinance, like Durjodhana, and the greedy deceptor, master-gambler, Sakuni. The Asurika qualities (demoniacal qualities) of hypocrisy, arrogance, conceit, wrath, harshness and unwisdom were those with which the sons of Dhritarastra were endowed, but the Pandavas were blessed with the divine qualities of vigour, forgiveness, fortitude, purity, absence of envy and pride.‡ These demoniacal men built up a party through lust, power, wealth and the false expectation of something very great. Their only aim was to slay this enemy and seize his wealth, to conquer another and yet again confiscate his property and wealth. Success in life and happiness seemed to them to depend on the unjust usurpation of the wealth and property of others. Karna under-

* He might have assumed that name after his victory over his adversary.
† Ramayana, Uttarakanda, Cantos 13 and 14.
‡ The Bhagabata Gita, Chap. XVI, 3 and 4.

took an expedition of unjust conquest in order to wipe out the stigma of defeat by the Gandharvas. "It is said," says Pargiter, "that Pururava obtained sacrificial fire from the Gandharvas, learnt the way of making fire from Asvatha firesticks and sacrificed therewith, and that out of that fire he himself constituted three separate fires." Gandharva is a name for Vivasvata.* Again, a Gandharva was found to be the charioteer of Indra (Pargiter, p. 563). In the Mahabharata Gandharva Dhritarastra was sent to King Marutta as Indra's messenger to persuade him to give up his priest, Sambarta.

* Max Muller's Lectures on the Science of Language, Vol. II, P. 529.

Chapter XI.

The Coronation of Durjodhana.

Durjodhana thought of being crowned in the same manner as Yudhisthira was in the Rajasuya sacrifice, and he summoned his priest and the celebrated sages for the purpose, who enlightened him as follows:—

"You cannot perform that great sacrifice, so long as Yudhisthira is alive. O best of the Kurus, O foremost of kings, your long-lived father Dhritarastra is still alive. For this reason also you cannot perform it. There is, O lord, another great sacrifice resembling the Rajasuya. O foremost of kings, perform this sacrifice. Listen to me. All those rulers of earth, O King, who have come under your rule will pay you tribute in pure and impure gold. O best of Kings, with the gold make a (sacrificial) plough. O descendant of Bharata, with it plough the sacrificial ground. At that spot let there commence, O foremost of kings, with due rites and without any disturbance, the sacrifice, sanctified with Mantras and abounding in eatables. This sacrifice, worthy to be performed by virtuous men, is called Vaisnava. No person except the ancient Vishnu has ever performed it. This great sacrifice vies with that foremost of sacrifices, the Rajasuya. It is desired by us, and it is also for your good. It is capable of being performed without any disturbance. Your desire also will be fulfilled." Durjodhana approved of the suggestion of the learned Brahmanas and appointed fit persons to respective posts in the great sacrifice. Swift messengers were sent to invite kings and celebrated sages; and the Pandavas were not excepted. Having heard the words of the messenger, King Yudhisthira, that foremost of monarchs, thus spoke to him: "By good fortune, King Durjodhana, that enhancer of his forefathers' glory, is performing this foremost of sacrifices. We shall certainly go there, but we cannot do so now. We shall have to live in the forest for thirteen years according to our pledge." Hearing the words of Dharmaraja (Yudhisthira) Bhima thus spoke: "The King Dharmaraja, Yudhisthira, will then go, when he will put him (Durjodhana) into the fire kindled by this weapon. Speak these words to

Durjodhana—when at the end of the thirteenth year that lord of men, the Pandava, will in the sacrifice of battle pour upon the sons of Dhritarastra the ghee of his anger, then will I come." "O king, the other Pandavas did not say anything unpleasant" —the messenger on his return told everything to Dhritarastra's son. Then there came to the city of Dhritarastra many foremost of men, the rulers of various countries, and also many highly virtuous Brahmanas. Duly received in accordance with the ordinance, these lords of men experienced much delight and they were all well pleased. The King of Kings, that foremost of kings, Dhritarastra, surrounded by all the Kurus, felt the greatest joy and he thus spoke to Vidura: "O Khatwa, soon act thus that all men present in this sacrifice may with food served to them be refreshed and satisfied." Then the learned and the virtuous Vidura cheerfully entertained all the orders of men with meat and drink and also presented them with fragrant garlands and various kinds of garments. Having built many pavilions, that hero and the foremost of kings duly entertained the monarchs and the Brahmanas by thousands. He bestowed upon them wealth of various kinds and then bade them farewell. Having dismissed all the kings, Durjodhana, surrounded by his brothers, entered Hastinapur in company with Karna and Suvala's son (Sakuni). Sprinkling over him fried paddy and sandal paste, the people said: "By good luck, O king, your sacrifice has been completed without obstruction. But it does not come to the sixteenth part of that former sacrifice." Thus spoke to that King some that were reckless in their speech. His friends said: "This your sacrifice has surpassed all others." Durjodhana cheerfully entered the city and his iron palace. Then paying his respect at the feet of his father and mother and to others headed by Bhisma, Drona and the wise Vidura, and being worshipped also by his younger brothers, that delighter of his brothers sat on an excellent seat, surrounded by them all. Then Karna rose and spoke to him:— "O foremost of the Bharata race, by good luck you have completed the great sacrifice. When the Pandavas will be killed in battle and when you will thus be able to complete the Rajasuya sacrifice, then at that time again I shall thus honour you." Durjodhana, embracing Karna, exclaimed in great despair: "How shall I remove the Pandavas from my way to perform the Rajasuya sacrifice?" Karna thereupon declared his great vow of Asura observance: "I shall not wash my feet until and unless I kill Arjuna in battle. I shall give every-

thing, whoever will ask for it from me." The place resounded with shouts of joy and great praise. Durjodhana was installed with this proclamation of Karna in the great assembly. Durjodhana was found utterly wanting in all those high qualities which entitle a man to perform a religious sacrifice. The weak performers of the sacrifice had not the courage to speak to his face and tell him that coronation cannot follow unjust usurpation. The sacrifice and the coronation of Durjodhana are not mentioned in the table of contents. There is no mention of the abdication of the throne to him; if it was so, then nothing stood against Durjodhana's being proclaimed as the Emperor of India. The Pandavas retired to the forest on a mutual understanding between Yudhisthira and his uncle for the sake of preserving peace and improving good feeling amongst the cousins—the Kurus and the Pandavas—and on the grounds of enhancing the prestige of the family and the good administration of the country for a certain number of years. If the old King Dhritarastra had remained on the throne, he would have to make good the pledge; but to avoid this the coronation of Durjodhana took place quietly with the Vishnu sacrifice. It was for this reason that the Pandavas did not associate themselves in any way with the function, when invited; but the blunt Bhima spoke out plainly concerning the object and the result of the ceremony to the envoy who went to invite the Pandavas. No names of kings were given in the texts of the Mahabharata, nor were the functions of the great sages who performed the sacrifice given. It is only said that the golden sacrificial plough was made of the gold from the tributes of the subdued Kings. It is only natural that the near and dear relations should be present at the ceremony and their names at least should find a place in the important functions of the great ceremony or in expressing their felicitation at the coronation of Durjodhana; but no such mention is found in the texts of the Mahabharata.

Durjodhana married the daughter of the King of Kalinga and Durjodhana's daughter, Lakshmana, was married to the son of Sri Krishna, Samba. Balarama was very friendly with Durjodhana, having been his preceptor in the club fight. If they were present, their names must needs have been mentioned. The great battle of Kurukshettra was the result of Durjodhana's foolish decision of not agreeing to carry out the pledge of his father when he would come to the throne. In the circumstances, the coronation of Durjodhana must have taken place; but the good kings and even the near and dear relatives, like

the Yadavas, did not take part in it. There had been struggles, full of envy and hatred, for power, wealth, dominion and enjoyment on earth; but the ideal life and actions of an ideal Emperor, reflected in the ancient literature of India, demonstrated that a theocracy had developed from the monarchical form of Government in India. Those few who could impress the nation, with their character and works, as being worthy and fit to represent the nation as a whole, were called Emperor. The fashion of worshipping wealth and power must have disappeared before the force of virtue and morality. The great problem of the reconstitution of India lay in awakening the conscience of a nation and to make each kingdom recognise the just claims of a great man who, by his virtue, culture, morality and spiritual advancement, was fit to be the leader of the states and countries which constitute an Empire. The traditional establishment of ancient royal houses might have been important in some countries, but it was not so in all the countries of India. The vanity of a king like Durjodhana who was installed on the throne of the Kurus was an important event in the epoch-making confluence of ages—Dwapara and Kali. Sisupala's removal and Durjodhana's ascendancy, one after the other, could not but speak of the advent of the Dark Age or the Kali Yuga. The blindness of the senile Dhritarastra became conspicuous in spirit as well as in deed; the Kuru Court became a Hell on Earth.

Durjodhana was very much elated with the past martial glories of his great adherents, Bhisma, Drona, Kripa, Aswathama, who were bought with rich presents of all kinds, worthy of and acceptible to them. They became the slaves of the wicked usurper and tyrant of the throne, to which he had no legitimate right to assert his claim. This had been the justification pleaded by these men for taking up the cause of Durjodhana in the wicked war. Sri Krishna in his great peace mission openly declared in the Kuru Court before all that the death knell of these great warriors had sounded when they failed in their duty by espousing the cause of an unjust usurper, tempted by the enjoyment of the wealth and power placed at their disposal by the wicked Durjodhana. Yudhisthira, duly crowned as the Emperor of India, showed to the world on the other hand that he did not care so much for his possessions, either of wealth or kingdoms, as for becoming a just ruler of the religious and spiritual world by the enthronement of justice, political morality and spiritual magnanimity. The greatest triumph of the age was contained

in the mortality of the invincible "immortal" heroes of the Kurus and in the passing of Yudhisthira in person to Heaven, which even Sri Krishna himself could not do. Sri Krishna and Yudhisthira are represented in the epic as ideals; and their triumph and success in attaining divinity entitled the Mahabharata to receive the name of "Jaya." The good advice and instruction from the life experience of the celebrated progenitors, Pururava and Yajati, contained in the Srimad Bhagavata and in the Mahabharata, received the distinctive names of Aila Gita and Yajati Gatha which found a place in the great institutes of Manu. They warned their descendants not to be carried away by the enjoyment of the senses nor to become bent with old age (Jara) or disease. The Yadava, Sri Krishna, and the Pandava, Yudhisthira, followed the good advice of their forefathers. For this reason Sri Krishna did not accept the throne of any kingdom, not even of Dwarka, which he had founded, but made his father, Vasudeva, the King of that place.

Durjodhana of the Kurus disregarded this good advice of his forefathers and incurred their displeasure and even their curse on account of the way in which he had occupied the throne. The Mahabharata gives out why Yadu and his brothers were disinherited—for disregarding indirectly the great advice that the Yajati Gatha preaches.

Never is desire extinguished by enjoying the objects of gain, just as the fire fed with libations of clarified butter lights up with double vigour. He who has been crowned with success in obtaining the objects of his desire and the man who has renounced all the objects of his desire—the latter of the two, the man of renunciation, is superior to the former so far as enjoyment is concerned. For the human senses, attached to their respective objects, can not be so effectively controlled by withholding them from their objects as by cultivation of knowledge. He who is wicked at heart can never be successful even through the study of the Vedas, renunciation, the performances of religious sacrifices, self-control and devotional austerities*. This had been the case with Durjodhana, but Yudhisthira showed by his great example that he had conquered his senses. He did not feel pleasure or pain upon having heard, touched, seen, eaten or smelt anything good or bad.

The people were alarmed by the vow of Karna which followed upon the declaration of Durjodhana and clearly hinted at a future

* Manu Samhita, Chap. II, Verses 94-97.

fight between the Kurus and the Pandavas. The news spread like wild fire and the Pandavas were, in due course of time, duly informed of what had happened in the sacrifice and coronation of Durjodhana. The Emperor Yudhisthira did not sit idle in the forest or weep over his misfortunes but carried on great works of administration. The Pandavas lived on fruits and roots and passed their days fully engaged in the great work of regeneration.* They introduced agriculture in the great forests of India and made them the happy home of civilised people. The excellent Brahmanas migrated to the forests from the towns, following the Pandavas. Draupadi introduced cooked food and drink and was famous for her cooking. Her name for good cooking passed into proverb and is even now used in Hindu households. Eventually they left Dvaitavana and went to the forest of Kamyaka near the lake Trina Vindu, which was full of wild animals. They killed those animals that were enemies of the peaceful inhabitants of the forest. They converted the forest into an ideal retreat for the sages, free from all dangers of life in their sojourn there. They taught the people how to clear the forest and grow excellent corn. The Pandavas did not live in one forest for a very long time lest it should interfere with the enjoyments of the animals. The Pandavas and also Draupadi were all learned and engaged themselves in religious discussions with Yudhisthira. They passed their time in this way; the time did not lie heavy upon them. Besides they passed time in the company of the great sages, who visited them or to whose hermitages they went.

To practise the Yoga of self-subdual had been the aim with which the great Yudhisthira had retired into the forest. It is the subject matter of the discourse in the Bhagabata Gita between Sri Krishna and Arjuna.† He was performing such acts as he was in duty bound to do, irrespective of the fruit of such action. He lit no sacrificial fire, performed neither sacrifices nor ceremonies, but renounced the world in order to be a real ascetic. An ascetic tries to subdue his senses; to him a lump of earth is a lump of gold; for he is satisfied with wisdom and knowledge. Interest in self is beneficial when controlled by knowledge and is detrimental when it is not so. The ascetic is not depressed for he feels no attachment either for the objects of the senses or for the results of actions. He is said to be engrossed in Yoga when he renounces the formative will (Sankalpa). His

* Vana Parvana, Chap. CCLVIII, Verses 2-4.

† Gita, Chapter VI.

only aim is the purification of the soul in order to attain the summum bonum of emancipation; the mind, controlled, attains peace and supreme bliss in the divine love of the Supreme Parmatma or soul divine. He then cannot be shaken by any sorrow, however great, for he is free from longing after all desirable things. He finds supreme delight in reason; the conscience enjoys the infinite bliss of contact with the Eternal. "Neither in this world nor in the life to come is there destruction for him; never doth any who worketh righteousness tread the path of woe."* Yoga goes beyond the knowledge of the Vedas.† A Yogi is greater than the ascetics, the men of action or the wise men; therefore Sri Krishna advises Arjuna to become a Yogi. He who is full of faith, with the inner-self abiding in the soul divine, is considered to have attained the goal of perfection and happiness. He regards all friends and foes, relatives and strangers, in the same light. In a pure place he is established, on a fixed seat of cloth or skin, neither raised nor low, and constantly keeps himself engaged in Yoga.

* The Bhagabata Gita, Ch. VI, Verse 40
† Ibid, Ch. VI, Verse 46.

Chapter XII.

The Great Power of Religious Devotion.

There seems to have been a strange belief amongst the ancient Hindus in the great power of austerities. Indra, King of Gods in Heaven, is said to be in constant fear, lest some mortal should usurp his throne through his austerities. Gods are often compelled against their will to grant the prayers of men and Asuras through their austerities. Amba is said to have practised great austerities to effect the death of Bhisma and her transformation into Sikhandi. Dhristadyumna's birth is similarly said to have been connected with the death of Drona. Durjodhana was very much gratified with the fulfilment of his great ambition to be crowned, yet he was not happy in his heart on account of the austerities of the Pandavas and their great chivalry, which he had personally witnessed in the great fight with the Gandharvas, when he, with his men and family, was released by them. The continual struggles which the Pandavas had with the aborigines offered them ample opportunities to practise the use of arms to the best advantage. The degrading ideas of the King of Gods varied with the times. Indra was engaged in great austerities to kill his enemies. He was no longer the gorgeous martial God in a magnificent palace of Heaven, surrounded by dancers and singers, indulging fully with his associates and courtesans in the drinking of Soma wine. Likewise Durjodhana after the coronation was preoccupied with vile thoughts of how to remove his great enemies, the Pandavas, who would contest his claim to the throne after their vow to pursue austerities for a period of thirteen years had been fulfilled.

The visit of the notorious sage, Durbasa, gave him an opportunity to devise a plan which would remove with ease the great obstacles in his way. He was a sage very difficult to please by hospitality, as he was irascible, indulging often in cursing the host for trivial omissions. It is said that Durjodhana took pains to satisfy him with his hospitality and was blessed with a boon. Durbasa was induced to accept the hospitality of the Pandavas with his numerous disciples on the next day, in the afternoon, when the Pandavas had finished their meals, so that

there would be a nice opportunity of irritating Durbasa who might thereupon curse the Pandavas with destruction. Thus the usurping King Durjodhana was playing his part very well, displaying in full his great talents.

Hospitality is one of the cardinal points of virtue, is very much praised, and was practised in ancient India to great excess. Examples of it are not wanting in the great epic. Vyasa recited to the ascetic Yudhisthira the story of Mudgala who went to heaven for giving up his scanty portion of food to the sage Durbasa. There is also a story that a female pigeon urges her mate to sacrifice itself to provide a meal for the fowler. The gate of heaven is reached by the just use of hospitality in Hindu religion and hence it is fostered with great vigour and even excess. The old customs of beggars, who would sit at the door and refuse to go away till their requests were granted, were much encouraged. The use and abuse of hospitality in ancient India raised important questions of morality and worldly lessons of life and action. Good conduct on the part of the host and the guest is the essential and the most important point—if they are both good and their actions are *bonafide*, then a guest, poor or rich, irrespective of caste, creed or colour, is very much respected, like a deity for whose enjoyment the pious Hindu householder will sacrifice anything.

The question of chastity in connection with the laws of hospitality towards a guest was settled in the great epic. It is said that a revered Vedic sage, Uddalaka, had offered his own wife to his guest, but his learned son, Svataketu, took strong exception to that usage and discontinued the practice. Common laws are but the usages of time. The great King Sudarsana went to heaven in person, being rewarded by Virtue, who tested his great control of the senses when he appeared in the guise of a Brahmana guest, asking to enjoy his beautiful queen, to which he did not object. His queen who strongly objected to it was converted into a river, Oghabati. An instance of the abuse of hospitality is found in the Ramayana when King Ravana carried away Sita to his Kingdom, but the great Rama Chandra showed that by accepting the hospitality of Ahalya he delivered her from the force of the unjust curse of her husband, Goutama.

Markandeya recited the story of a chaste devoted housewife. She annoyed the ascetic Koushika, who was vainglorious of his great power and was about to curse her for neglecting him in preference to her own husband. She had attended her husband first, although the ascetic guest came before her husband and

was told to wait for alms. The pious lady warned and mocked the ascetic about his great power of burning a heron to ashes but he would not be able to do it so easily as far as she was concerned. The ascetic became dumbfounded as to how the lady came to know all about the past incidents of his life of which she had no knowledge before*. This has passed into a proverb and is often quoted in common parlance. The pious chaste lady did not forget to give this good lesson to the ascetic that the demons Atapi and Batapi were killed by the illustrious sage Agastya when they began to abuse hospitality. The name of Agastya and the act of digesting the cruel monsters are mentioned in a Mantra (or incantation) to cure indigestion which is used even now by orthodox Hindus. It cannot be overlooked that the great plan of Durjodhana was not accomplished, as the great sage Durbasa and his disciples were attacked with dyspepsia, having been overfed by Durjodhana with rich food and drink in which the poor ascetics were then unaccustomed to indulge. The text of the Mahabharata quoted below will speak for itself:—

"Our stomachs are full to the throat how can we eat anything?
The food prepared will be useless for us."†

It is however held that the attempt of Durbasa to curse the Pandavas was foiled by the devotion and worship of Sri Krishna by Draupadi who was called upon by the Pandavas to undertake the arduous and difficult task of looking after the comforts of a guest in the forest. Her great accomplishments and domestic virtues passed into current proverb.

Durbasa was a great sage and could not be convicted of not doing a thing which he had distinctly promised to do before Durjodhana, unless prevented by fear or by the duty he owed to the divine order of saints to which he belonged. The fact seems to have been this, as supported by the quoted texts of the Mahabharata in the words of Durbasa—that the past cruel experience of cursing the good King Ambarisha came to his mind and made him give up the idea:—

"Will not the Pandavas destroy us by looking down upon us with angry eyes? I know that the royal sage Yudhisthira is endowed with great ascetic powers. I am afraid of those men who are devoted to Vishnu. The Pandavas are his devotees and are high-souled, pious, heroic, observant of vows and of

* Mahabharata, Vana Parvana, Chap. CCV.

† Mahabharata, Vana Parvana, Chap. CCLXII, Verse 31.

devout penances. They can consume us with their anger in the manner that fire consumes a bale of cotton, so let us run away quickly without seeing them.''* Further the significant fact that the wise sages of the forests were the instructors and guardians of the Pandavas since their births cannot be overlooked. They were their godfathers who were good and kind enough to ascribe divine origin to their respective qualities of head and heart. They were in duty bound to protect and safeguard the interests of the brothers to the best of their abilities. Durbasa must have been prevailed upon by them to give up the unjust cause of Durjodhana, on the plea of illness, if not on the plea of retributive justice in the hands of God which he had already experienced in the case of the unjust cursing of King Ambarisha. Durbasa was said to be an incarnation of the material God Siva, and the great Kuru generals and the adherents of Durjodhana were Saivas. The performance of Vishnu Yajna by Durjodhana must have been a mockery without the presence of Sri Krishna there. The Kurus were Saivas—all the sons of Dhritarastra were born out of the boon of Siva; even the great Vyasa was born likewise. The worship of the material God Siva is the most ancient. Thereafter Siva acknowledges the greatness of Narayana, being instructed to do so by Brahma, and ultimately the worship of Vishnu and Krishna is found exalted as the Supreme Being. The Mahabharata shows the gradual development of morality and the spiritual progress of a nation, even when it was cast in dramatic form. The epic described the great idea of ascending to heaven in person, instead of going into the next world after death, by the practice of austerity, culture and hospitality. Consequently the mental and spiritual advancement, rather than the material questions of fulfilling abject ambitions of life in which the destruction of others was associated, was the subject matter of the great epic. Sri Krishna is said to have worshipped Siva for his son Samba, and Arjuna is said to have worshipped Siva and Durga, at the instance of the great sage, as well as Krishna, for material success in war and in the use of arms. The question of the acquisition of worldly possessions and of preserving the line of succession by law and marriages in the great family of kings was illustrated in the Mahabharata in the Narayana worship for the birth of Draupadi and her brothers; but her marriage with the five Pandavas was ascribed to a boon from the great God Siva. The material God Siva was quite blind to follow the real intention

* Vana Parvana, Chap. CCLXII.

of the devotee, which Vishnu Janardan alone could do. The Vana Parvana describes the great fight between Siva and Arjuna which ended in the victory of Arjuna who was initiated into the use of the great weapon of Siva, as a reward and acknowledgment of his great military skill. All the followers of Siva were the great warriors of the age like Drona, Kripa and Asvathama. Parasurama was an avatar of God and he was upset at the breaking of the bow of Siva by King Rama Chandra at the Swayambara marriage of Sita; and he was converted into Vaisnavism by Rama according to the Ramayana. The great Asura King Bali was sent to the nether world by another avatar of God, Bamana, and his son, Bana, was a devoted worshipper of Siva. Bana's daughter, Usha, fell in love with Anurudha, the grandson of Sri Krishna, and their private marriage brought about a fight in which Siva and Krishna fought hand to hand and ended in the victory of the latter. All these prove that Durbasa was overpowered by the might of Vaisnavism and did not think of doing anything against the Pandavas, the great followers of Sri Krishna and Vishnu. Durbasa was not so mean as to agree to give a boon to Durjodhana in the manner as it was introduced in the current Mahabharata.

The real merit of hospitality and munificence lies in the true devotion of the host and the donor, and not anything else. The sacrifices of Kings were undertaken as instances of great hospitality to the general public and the awarding of gifts publicly to any one who sought them. The great epic begins with the hospitality of King Janmejoya to the sage Astika, in spite of the grave warning from the great performer of the snake sacrifice; but it was in vain. For the sage asked a boon which frustrated the object of the great King. The same was the case with King Bali. The value and merit and effectiveness of a curse lies in the great question of who is in the right or wrong. This was also discussed in the beginning of the Mahabharata, for it could not be overlooked. There is the curse of the dog which was beaten without any justification and which declared that the object of the great snake sacrifice would not be fulfilled. The great God Indra, by giving his protection to Takshaka, the King of snakes, was drawn to the flames with it, thus showing the great power of the sacrificer and of the performers. The great God was saved by a sage called Astika, whose very name implied that he was not an atheist. The performance of sacrifices for revenge was not highly spoken of, or approved of, by the great sages. This sort of sacrifice was

undertaken by the sage Parasara, father of Vyasa, to revenge the death of his father, Sakti, but was discontinued by the great sages of the day. The boon of Durbasa to Durjodhana to abuse the hospitality of the Pandavas is far from the facts of actual life in ancient India; and the name of Durbasa would be soiled. To prove the devotion of the Pandavas and Draupadi to the divinity of Sri Krishna this was prevented, thus exposing the wickedness of Durjodhana. The hospitality of ancient India should not have been vilified as it was by the rhapsodists—somewhat unwillingly perhaps—just to please the audience with scenes of comedy and farce.

It seems that the blunt Bhima called out to the fleeing Durbasa and his disciples; the sense of his words is well expressed in the language of the great English poet Shakespeare:—

> "You have now a broken banquet, best we'll mend it
> A good digestion to you all; and once more
> I shower a welcome on you—welcome all!"

Science did not prove the identity of God. The people were honest to worship an inspired and imaginary identity as God. There was a time when the refulgent 'Om,' that gladdens and illumines the heart of the ascetics and visibly controls the weather and senses, reigned supreme. This was acknowledged to be a form of Divinity according to the elements of Nature which were represented in their great Gods like Indra, Vayu, Varuna, etc. The common laws of worship are but the usages of time. People accept a certain given definition of a suppositious Divinity with a suitable code of morals and maxims for the good of society, and it is called Religion. To the limited sight and restricted knowledge miracles were the order of the day—there was a thing, a Higher Power, hidden behind the veil of visible Nature. Human reason has to be trained and taught to pulverise into indistinguishable atoms all supernatural propositions. God embodies a portion of His Own Existence in human form to teach the World by precept and example the best way to eternal happiness. God exists in the Creation and manifests Himself in the laws of creation. His marvellous love controls and guides creation towards some majestic end, very hard to illumine and to demonstrate. The masses were very much pre-occupied with foolish omens and forecasts of evil in the phenomena of Nature. They believed in the absurd notion of a deity or deities whom it was necessary to propitiate in order to live well. The seed of religion had been sown in the forest life of the Pandavas and the harvest would be reaped in time.

A glorious age was fast approaching when the vile game of dice would be a thing of the past as a royal pastime. Durbasa's visit to the Pandavas at the instance of Durjodhana could have been an attempt to curse the Pandavas, as the sage Maitreya had cursed Durjodhana. But the Pandavas were not so bad and foolish as Durjodhana.

The memory of the great hospitality of the Pandavas, associated with the eminent services of Draupadi in their forest life, still lingers in the name of a place at Kamoda, six miles to the south-east of Thaneswar, called Draupadi-ki-Bhandar. It is said in the Skanda Purana* that it was Draupadi, and not Yudhisthira, who got the boon of a vessel from the Sun, as a reward for her devotion, whereby she could satisfy the hunger of everybody before she would take her own food; but in the Mahabharata it was Yudhisthira who got it. The Puranas are great works composed a considerable time after the epic poems; they represent extravagant developments of devotion to Gods. In the current Mahabharata the ode to the Sun, with its one hundred and eight names, was recited with the hymn on the divine attributes of the Sun. There are also one thousand names in the odes to Vishnu and Siva in the Mahabharata, which seems to be a sort of compromise in the question of worship; but it cannot be overlooked that the foundation of righteousness is ascribed to truth, and it was Yudhisthira who was identified with it. Consequently, he was the hero of the great epic. The dramatic epics not only describe the gifted heroes and heroines but give them attributes, incredible in a mere mortal, which enable them to rank with demigods. They went further than this in later developments and revisions when somethings, which the Gods themselves could not do, were said to have been accomplished by demoniac sages like Agastya, Bhrigu and Durbasa. Agastya is said to have swallowed the ocean, Bhrigu is said to have brought God down to earth by a curse and to have kicked Vishnu, and Durbasa became famous for his powers of blessing and cursing. Sri Krishna's death was ascribed to his failure to follow the blessing of Durbasa, given when he satisfied him by his hospitality; Sri Krishna failed to put the ointment on his feet, which would have made that part invulnerable to the attack of an arrow or any other weapon.

There is some higher Power hidden behind the veil of visible Nature. It is a magnificent panorama, as lovely as a

* Kasi Khanda—First half of Chapter XLIX.

delicately pictured scene of Fairyland, where the bright singers of hymns of praise to God unseen were heard by those who could read the unwritten music of the spheres of Nature! There is in heaven an Eternity of joy where all shall, at last, find an asylum, the greatest of all human goals. There the dwellers realise that God himself has surely a smile to spare in every morning glow for the singers who rouse the world from their daily deaths of slumber. Resurrection and death follow, one after the other, in the rising of the Sun and in its setting, in the morning and evening.

Chapter XIII.

Idols of Worship.

The sordid manufacture of the instruments of death to kill their enemies constituted the chief business of the Gods. Indra was famous for his great discovery of thunder with which he killed his adversary Vritta-Siva in order to obtain his great trident (Trishula) and the Pashupata weapons; Vishnu was celebrated for his discus; and Brahma was celebrated for giving all kinds of boons to the Asuras to make them almost immortal in their own estimation. The great teacher in the art of wielding the celestial weapons of the Gods was Parasurama. Vyasa advised Arjuna to obtain the celestial weapon from the Gods Siva and Indra in person through the austerities of Yoga practice into which he initiated him. It then became imperative for dealing effectively with the crying evils of the age to remove the great disciples of Parasurama. The birth of Draupadi's brother, Sikhandi, and his transformation into a hermaphrodite for the purpose of killing the lifelong anchorite Bhisma are connected with the boons of Siva. Jayadratha, the husband of Dushala, the sister of Durjodhana, was blessed with the boon of Siva to vanquish all the Pandavas, except Arjuna, once in his life on the battle-field.

Jayadratha was the King of Sindhu, a territory of the Punjab, who was struck with the beauty of Draupadi when he saw her standing alone at the threshold of the hermitage in the forest of Kamyaka. It so happened that the Pandavas were then not at home; but their priest Dhaumya was there and in his care the Pandavas had left her. The wicked Jayadratha took undue advantage of this situation by carrying away Draupadi by force, in spite of warnings from Dhaumya and Draupadi herself. Evil omens made Yudhisthira immediately despatch Bhima and Arjuna to their home—they saw Dhatreyika, the beloved maid of Draupadi, lying down in the grove of their hermitage, weeping. Dhaumya informed them of what had happened. The five Pandavas immediately ransacked the forest and caught hold of the wicked Jayadratha who fled, leaving Draupadi, out of fear for his own life; but he fled in vain. Bhima soon overpowered

him, brought him down from his car, and kicked him on the head; but Arjuna saved him from death. The great Yudhisthira set him at liberty with the warning that he had better not commit an act like this in future, and blessed him, saying :—'May your heart grow in virtue.' Even the good Draupadi felt pity, seeing the wretched condition of Jayadratha who was disfigured by Bhima's blows and kicks—he was bleeding badly from the tufts of the hair of his head, which were severed when seized by Bhima, and he prayed for his release. Jayadratha, thus disgraced, did not return home but became an ascetic at the source of the Ganges and began to worship Siva. All these lend additional colour to the war panegyric. Indra, after initiating Arjuna into the celestial weapons, did not forget to test his vow of Brahmacharya, when confronting him with the love of Urvashi and her ultimate curse to make Arjuna live in the harem of the King of Virata, as a teacher of dancing to his future daughter-in-law, Uttara. All these may fit in in a romance or a fiction, but it is a matter of surprise that they were incorporated into the great epic. The Mahabharata justifies the speaking of falsehood in five distinct cases. Falsehood is sinful when its object is sinister. No sane man can approve of the practice of falsehood except for reasons of State policy. Falsehood in the marriage ceremony was then not prohibited and, what is more, was sanctioned and allowed*. The false report of Draupadi's five husbands was connected with the boon of Siva in the Markandeya Purana. The royal sage, Vrihadaswa, told the story of Nala and Damayanti to Draupadi to relieve her wounded feelings after the gambling match. Nala was the King of the Nishadas and Damayanti was his famous chaste wife. When they were separated, Nala could not be found; and, to find him out, the marriage of Damayanti for the second time was announced. Nala, in the guise of Bahuka, appeared to test Damayanti. Bahuka enquired: "How is it, like an unchaste woman, Damayanti would choose one, whomsoever she likes, once having done so before?" Damayanti told him that the announcement was nothing but a means to an end. A Brahmin, named Parnada, brought the message that King Nala was in the palace of Rituparna, King of Ayodhya. To bring him here this announcement was made. Eventually, they were united and the false report succeeded in bringing this about—and they were the ideal husband and wife. It is evident from this that the

* Adi Parvana, Chap. LXXXII, Verses 16-17.

false report for the accomplishment of a harmless aim was not then considered sinful or a misconduct on the part of a good King or Queen. Besides, it cannot be overlooked that Draupadi had offered benediction to Arjuna which he accepted with obeisance as from an elder brother's wife, before he went to practise Yoga to obtain the celestial weapon. Draupadi read lectures to Sri Krishna's wife, Satyabhama, on the duties of an ideal wife (Vana Parvan). Draupadi never appealed to the other Pandavas to redress her grievances but spoke only to her husband Yudhisthira about her privations and miseries. The intelligent teachers who revised the Mahabharata found time and opportunity to present lessons on the great virtues of mankind, with illustrations of the ideal or through allegory, apologue or fiction. Words of wisdom were sometimes heard through the mouths of the birds and beasts which were given the power of speech. The great Indian epic became the national property of the Aryan nation of great India, which position the Ramayana did not fill to the same extent, notwithstanding that its author was given the credit of being the first poet. The great Indian epic was revised according to the national instincts of regenerated Hinduism and those who ranked highest in every branch of science, literature and philosophy were identified in the great revision; but the mischief was done by the foolish rhapsodists who could not realise the great aim of the revisers. The gist of the works of the great poets like Magha, Bharavi, Bhavabhuti was incorporated in the Vana Parvan to pass the time in the way that Vishnu-Sarma advocated in his Hitopodesa; but they cannot form part of the real Mahabharata.

The epic kernel, as it stood in the real Mahabharata, cannot be missed. This is the song concerning success in life, sung in honour of Divine Love which had its origin in Sri Krishna and great good Brahmanas. The good and great heroes of the age were the Pandavas who were their defenders—let all of them be praised! The spirit of God is manifest in the creation and the soul of man is reflected in Divine Love, when the heart of man unites with the spirit of God; at that moment the emancipation of the soul takes place in the sublime unity, and the dual becomes one. Draupadi was the glow-worm of Divine Love. All the wives of the Pandavas left the forest to live with their relatives; Draupadi alone was the great housewife who prayed to God for the success of her husband and blessed the younger Pandavas, her brothers-in-law, in their great undertakings. The light and shade of Divine Love are known by the names Krishna (Sri Krishna) and Krishna Draupadi,

Draupadi was the great social reformer of the age—by her hospitality she could convert the cannibals and wild savages—against the vile inclinations of the Kurus and the King Jayadratha, who were the worst enemies of society and who could not be corrected except by death. The primeval Sakti Uma disappeared in the great sacrifice of Daksha, created by the fiat of the will of Brahma and the father of Uma (the great spouse of Siva), as a protest against the vile censure of her husband. Vishnu was the great God who disillusioned the material God Siva and relieved his great grief at the loss of his wife Uma. Uma was born to rescue the world from all those vices produced by the intrigues of men and Gods and to establish the pure Divine Love; the primeval Sakti became the centre of sacrifices in the worship of Divine Love, for she sacrificed her own body to expand the soul, on account of which Vishnu created shrines in many different parts of India with the sacred body of Uma.

The great thrones might be the seats of the conquerors of the world, but they could not command the hearts of men and women. There were loud lip-loyalties given in the courts and vague salutes from practised heads, but there was hardly any reciprocity of feeling between the monarchs and their subjects as existed in the forest life of the Pandavas. Fools sacrifice their lives for the possession of a woman out of lust, and then cry in the wilderness: Woe to man is a woman! Draupadi appeared in the rôle of God's messenger of Divine Love, a Princess of genius and great intellect, full of forbearance worthy of the angel's soul within. The Pandavas were bound to preside over the destiny of all mortals; and Draupadi was the emblem of prosperity and a glory to the world wherever she dwelt. Her soft eyes, her tender mouth did not open to suggest the dreamy musings of passion, high ambition or a luxurious life; but she would spring up, as if from a horrible dream, her voice thrilling with pain, disturbing the stillness of the placid earth:—"My worst enemies considered my body desecrated with passion and enjoyment, as one who had accepted five husbands instead of one." Let the world see that she was never a woman of blood and flesh, who loved an easy life of romance and luxury, like such a dissolute Queen as Cleopatra! Even she knew the value of earthly love and accepted the deadly poison of a snake rather than the false heart of a King! What a shame! Draupadi was thought to be worse than her, when she was called upon to accept a sixth husband in the Kuru Court! She was not the

Queen to bear children to rule Kingdoms, and thus save the husband from hell—her husband, Yudhisthira, saved himself. Her love was never meant exclusively for him only—she wanted to make the whole family of her husband happy and thus establish a Kingdom of love and peace. She was not the ordinary type of woman who is to blame for breaking up the home and the love that exists between brothers, or for making peace impossible between co-wives and their children. Her husband and his brothers saved her from their powerful enemies, the tigers and lions; they were made tame and no longer did they think of injuring anyone. Her good husband had given the Empire to the Kurus so that they, too, might be tamed. Such a good man like her husband was not meant for this earth below, but should dwell in Heaven above.

God dwells in the heart and head of ideal men and women. Wherever the spirit of God dwells, there is Heaven. A man and a woman must think why he or she came into the world, what is the work before them and what is their relationship with the world. Draupadi was the great invigorator of the age, who inspired the tired Pandavas with food and drink and made them great devotees of Divine Love. They were not stirred to work by hopes of the next world. They found plenty of amusement in the task before them which they pursued with prayer, devotion and psalms of praise. They seldom had an opportunity of idling; they could hatch many useful schemes in the forest, free from care and mischief. What one wise head could hatch there, thousands of men would muddle their heads over—to find out how to accomplish and how to turn everything to their advantage. The Pandavas were ever ready with their arms to carry out the great work before them—their heads and hands never put away any task they undertook without accomplishing it. Powers of invention and skill were much more required in the great work before the Pandavas than mere physical effort. The spirit of God dwelt in them, to revive the dying hope and energy of human beings, to resuscitate the great dynasty of the Indo-Aryan race of Kings, who had fallen and degenerated through the vice and luxury of the age. The great work before the Pandavas was to show to the world what was the difference between Heaven and Hell.

Dvaitavana forest was the birth-place of Jaimini, the great founder of the Mimansa school of philosophy and a disciple of Vyasa and an author of the Mahabharata which at that time consisted only of the Asvamedha Parvana of forty-three

chapters. There took place the meeting of the two great supermen of the age, Sri Krishna and Yudhisthira, whose deeds and works were the subject matter of the great epic. None of them was guilty of the bellicose impulses of the Kuru Court. The philosophy with which the great epic is identified is the unity of the soul of the universe with that of a great superman. Body, mind and spirit were at work—there, in that forest—and they could not rest satisfied with questions of material gain and imperial power. Their great ideal seems to have been contained in the words of the poet:—

> "Love rules the Court, the Camp, the grove
> And men below and saints above."

Warmly they exchanged their mutual admiration, their great principles of religion, their philosophies of life, death and immortality.

Virtue is eternal; so is the soul of man. Should a man die the death of an insect, which flies with fleeting joy to perish in the glow of a burning light? The real growth of a human being is not a question of years, dependent on food and drink and climate, like a plant dependent on the power of good seed, on the fertility of the soil, on sun and rain. The growth of real man and woman depends on culture and good society. The pilgrim fathers of the day were the recluses who lived in their sylvan retreats. The forests were not then the hunting places of Kings and Princes but the retreats of the good retired Kings, who used to pass the last days of their lives in meditation and communion with God. The great Kapila, who discovered the philosophy of Samkhya, Gautama the Naya, Patanyala the Yoga and others, the authors of the six Hindu systems of philosophy—they all lived in monasteries and preached to the world the mystery of the creation and its creator. Those places of ancient India became the abodes of cannibals and fearful man-eating animals. To restore these places to their pristine glory, when educational institutions once shaped religion and taught the students with the help of the sylvan beauty before them, the Pandavas removed these fearful enemies of humanity. The great Rama Chandra did likewise and with his brother Lakshmana and his beloved wife, Sita, passed the best part of his life in the forest. It was then part of the duties of good Kings to do so. Yudhisthira and his brothers were engaged in the great work before them. Durjodhana's vanity and importance were considerably enhanced by the occupation of a throne which the Pandavas left for his

gratification. At the Court, honour and fair play were not the first principles of action in most callings in order to achieve success. It is often seen that honourable men hardly succeed in the battle of life.

The rabid craving of the dark age for sensationalism led to an atrocious state of affairs. The Kurus heard that the Pandavas had converted the forests into beautiful retreats where they were comfortable and happy. The wicked occupant of the throne was stoically indifferent to the fate of all but his own. He thought that what the Pandavas did was meant for his enjoyment. He with his friends rushed towards the forest to claim them but Divine Providence ordained otherwise. Durjodhana was then afraid to suffer the censure of the general public and tried to be just in his dealings with others, the Pandavas of course excepted, with the ulterior motive of surpassing the fame of the Pandavas. Knowledge deepens the sorrow. Durjodhana and his friends compared their court with the home of the Pandavas which they saw in their imaginations; the birds and beasts supplied the Pandavas with a welcome in the morning and announced the parting in the evening with the sincere music of their voices; peacocks and young deer danced on the land; the ducks swimming in the pond and the playful swarm of pigeons soaring in the sky told a tale of the music of life to which the dwellers of Heaven are accustomed.

One cannot overlook the most important events of Sri Krishna's life and his worship since his birth. The appearance of a Divine child with a ball of food in his hand is a posture of matchless artistic beauty and of filial piety and is even now worshipped as Gopala—his paternal affection as a shepherd of Vrindavana for the lads and lasses of his age who were his playmates and great lovers is also something Divine. As a faithful lover he carried away Rukmini by force of arms; she fell in love with him after being convinced of his good qualities and greatness of head and heart, as displayed in her Swyamvara ceremony. He was not afraid to go against her father, Bhiswaka, and the powerful Jarasandha, who espoused the cause of the suitor Sisupala. The chief cause of enmity between Sri Krishna and Sisupala was the marriage of Rukmini. He was a great sympathiser, and the saviour of suffering humanity. He removed the great tyrants of the age, like Kamsa and Sisupala, and stood against the inhuman sacrifice of Jarasandha, killing him through Bhima and thus releasing eighty-six kings of India, who were intended for a human

sacrifice. He was the demonstrator of Divine Love who restrained the passions of over one thousand and sixteen hundred princesses of India. He solved the thorny question of caste in India by his own example in the actions of life. He was a Kshatriya by birth, a Vaisya by adoption, a Brahmin by education, recipient of the highest honour in the Rajasuya sacrifice of Yudhisthira in return for replacing that of Jarasandha, which was the wrong Sivaite conception of a sacrifice, and the great Emperor maker of India. The great lesson in the epic is heralded in the words of sympathy to Draupadi at the great meeting:

"Virtue grows and prospers with Divine Love. Weep not, thou virtuous lady; the drops of thy tears will be redeemed with the blood of thine enemies on the battle-field of virtue, if they are not penitent and if they do not follow my good counsel. Rest assured that thou shalt again adorn the throne of thy virtuous husband."

The first crusade was started by Sri Krishna against the evil machinations of the Kuru Court after their cruel attempt to burn the Pandavas in the Lac House; in the Swyamvara marriage of Draupadi, with the help of Krishna, the world saw the dead Pandavas win the hand of Draupadi, which was a great blow and disgrace to the Kauravas before the assembly of Kings. The persecution of Draupadi in the Kuru Court seemed to be a sort of retaliation by the great infidels against true Hindu religion and of its proper decency and morality. It involved the great question of Reform, through liberal ideal constitutions which were to be enforced on all Kings by a just Emperor like Yudhisthira. It was not settled in the beautiful palace chamber of Indraprastha, the splendid building of Maya Asura (or Maya), but in the sacred grove of a forlorn forest, in consultation with the great sages presided over by Sri Krishna.

Heaven was not found in the hanging garden of Babylon which was converted into a Tower of Babel. Death, disgrace and dispute rule in the Hell of all earthly enjoyments, in the Court of Kings and their palaces. The fleeting taste of happiness, rotating in the turning wheel of joy and sorrow, makes transient joy all the more bitter and not far removed from sorrow itself.

"There is the moral of all human tales;
'Tis but the same rehearsal of the past.
First freedom and then glory—when that fails,
Wealth, vice, corruption—barbarism at last!"—*Byron.*

The history of the world supplies important clues to the great triumphs of different ages in the lives of great Kings and various prophets. The Hindus count from the era of Yudhisthira, the Christians from the birth and death of Christ, and the Moslems from the date on which Mahomet fled from Mecca to Medina.

It cannot be overlooked that there is a kind of inter-relationship between the two great Indian epics, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. Yadu was said to have been the progenitor of the Rakshasas in the forest of Krauncha* and of his great representatives Sri Krishna and Balarama—one became the supreme ideal of Godhead and the other was accepted as an Avatara. They together formed the human demi-God Nara and God the spectator, Narayana. Narayana was the great God of preceptors whom Narada, the celestial sage, could not at first see but, after engaging himself in the practice of Yoga system and addressing a hymn of praise to him, as God of Gods, foremost of all beings, he succeeded in his attempt to see the great God Narayana. Narada's visit to Narayana is said to have been while the God resided in Sveta Dwipa, but such a name is not given out amongst the seven islands, the names of which are recited in the Mahabharata, *viz.*, Jamvu, Plaksha, Salmali, Kusa, Saka, Krauncha and Pushkara.

The form of Narayana was conceived to be a great Yogi figure who was awakened from His Samadhi (abstraction), after the deluge, by the prayers of great Brahma, who was identified as a God of creation who performed many sacrifices in various places of India where are the great shrines, much revered by the Hindus. Brahma is worshipped first in the sacrifice as the Superintendent of ceremonies and he is said to have sacrificed a horse in order to recover the sacred literature from Madhu and Kaitava; and the great Vishnu, it is said, assumed the head of a horse to kill the Asuras, Madhu and Kaitava, with the help of Maya or delusion.

The relationship between Nara and Narayana seems rather to be like that of the intelligence and the soul. Intelligence creates all the qualities while the soul beholds them only as a witness. The qualities do not know the soul, but the soul knows them all. Intelligence and soul, like a gnat and an animal, though distinguishable by their respective forms and nature, yet they may be seen together in a sort of union. It is held that abstention from acts leads one to supreme happiness, *i.e.*, by liberating himself from acts a man can succeed in entering into

* Ramayana, Uttarakanda, Canto 69.

Brahma. The true aim of religion is to lead one to emancipation. Sri Krishna, when reduced to a spectator and not an actor of a drama, ascended to the throne of a Divine God and received the worship due from the ideal Emperor Yudhisthira, as the foremost of all beings.

Nara (sage) is the preceptor and Narayana (sage) is the disciple in the Veda. God is seen and understood through the knowledge derived from the preceptor, and therefore he is respected as God himself. When God, who descended to earth on account of the curse of the great sage Bhrigu, the father-in-law of Vishnu, was found very much addicted to his wife, he had to accept a preceptor. Sri Krishna was the father of Cupid and was not in any way addicted to his wife or lover, Radha, like Rama Chandra who was an Avatar. Yudhisthira was never found, throughout his life of misfortune or prosperity, weeping over the great sufferings of Draupadi or lauding her to the seventh Heaven.

Charvaka, who was a philosopher that scoffed at all religion, was the great adviser of Durjodhana. He was killed, when disguised as a religious mendicant, in order to show disrespect to the respected class of ascetics and to escape death. Krishna's conception of Yoga system of emancipation is found in the Bhagabata Gita and his Divine Love is reflected in the Srimadbhagavata Purana. Sri Krishna was the great idol of worship, as a God, and Yudhisthira was worshipped, as an ideal Emperor of the age with the qualities of true justice, faith and religion.

CHAPTER XIV.

Self-Renunciation.

The Pandavas treated everything as a duty imposed upon them by Sri Krishna and their uncle Dhritarastra and not as a matter of pleasure or a plot to recover their Kingdom. The names of the places and divisions of India they visited as shrines were very important as they referred to two important classes of men who were the great leaders of thought in social, political, moral and religious spheres. The old Epic caught the complexion of the times and the Krishna cult was the dominating religious idea in its present shape. A home with children is a luxury that only breeds bitterness of feeling and sorrow; but a pilgrim, travelling through the wilderness as a pupil of God, instructed and disciplined as an heir of immortality, advances towards the inheritance of the saints, throwing away the cares and loads of his life of misery. A holy spirit brings forth good living—it is that spirit which actuates a pilgrim. Nothing is more difficult than to come to a decision about a man's real character from what one sees in his public life. A public character knows that all eyes are on him; he carefully guards against the slightest impropriety. He is consequently armed at all points to prevent detection. But a pilgrim has the natural impulses of heart and he displays his real temper and disposition. All wise work is honest, cheerful and in some way useful to mankind. A wise man does not serve two masters. Prayer does not ascend to God if ties of human affection are not purified and elevated by the refining influence of religious feeling and of spiritual emancipation. Real religion is unobtrusive and retiring; it is like a rivulet which sheds blessings in its progress without courting observation. Religion applies to the mind the spirit of heaven; the God who dwells there is not a cruel, jealous and revengeful being—He is all love and goodness. He does not care for a man's prayers but bestows what is best without the asking. Can the human vision go beyond death to satisfy the human heart of the certainty of religion and faith? It cannot see the soul within. Yudhisthira said in the

Stree Parvan*: "While I wandered in the forest I met with the celestial sage Lomasha in a sacred place who blessed me with the boon of spiritual vision. Again on another occasion I obtained second sight through the power of knowledge."

The best bulwark of a country's defence when it is threatened with dangers and difficulties on all sides is the party of good men with a great moral and spiritual leader. They are animated and sustained by the doctrines and consolations of the true religion of Faith and Piety. It is Piety which raises and fortifies the human mind. A pious man may leave ambitious men to contend for the great posts of political power or to win great laurels of martial fame. He will not on any account yield his palm to anyone in the real concern to advance the great cause of the prosperity of the nation as a whole.

The ancient shrines of India were the living memories of the great men and their virtues, coming down as they did from age to age. The Colossus may be one of the wonders of the world but it cannot vie with those ancient shrines which received tributes of love and worship from the great men and heroes of the ages, like Rama Chandra and Yudhisthira. The church records the deaths of saints and prophets in the West, and temples of the great Gods do so in the East; but the great Indian epics relate to times when there were neither histories nor temples, but sacred shrines in the obscure places of the quiet retreats of Kings who retired from the world to practise concentration of the mind for the emancipation of their souls. Pilgrims visit the sacred shrines to offer their tributes to the great memories of the past. Gods adorn temples and saints' memories live on in their hermitages; rocks and signs mark the places where great Kings were emancipated and the rivers which saved humanity from ruin and death were worshipped as sacred. It was not the scent of the ivy on the ruined temples or rocks which inspired them to visit the shrines. They were not stirred by hopes of the next world with all its dreamy happiness or concerned with the merit of visiting sacred shrines. The true implication of visiting shrines is given in the Anusasana Parvan. One should bathe his soul in the water of truth which is stored in the understanding as water is closed in a lake. Its fruit is freedom from covetousness, self-restraint and tranquillity. The man who actually cleansed his body with water at the shrines was not to be regarded as having actually condoned

* Chapter XXVI, Verse 19.

all his sins in life; but he could only consider himself purged, who had really practised self-denial.

Piety is the root of all disinterested motives. Real patriotism is evinced by firmness and consistency in opposing corruption which is speciously veiled and powerfully defended, and by readiness to make great sacrifices for the general good. A true lover of a country will not go with the popular cry but will be anxiously solicitous to save the fundamental principles of the constitution from violence and injury. He is gladly prepared to offer the most costly gifts at the shrine of conscience when called upon to do so. Men in great places are servants of the sovereign, of business, fame or family; so they have no freedom. Great men really have no need to make their stand on others' opinions to think themselves happy and prosperous. Neither promises nor threatenings, reasoning nor ridicule, should shake the firmness of their purpose nor stain the purity of their good conduct. This has been fully demonstrated in the great discussions between Yudhisthira, his brothers, Draupadi and the Yadavas, headed by Sri Krishna and Balarama, at the great shrine of Pravasa.

Sri Krishna said to Yudhisthira with good loud cheer: " Providence has willed that the sacred shrines of ancient India should be visited and restored by your presence; you are all here; and we have also all come on a pilgrimage to pay our respects to old memories as well as to you." Yudhisthira promptly replied: " You had then a right to reign here and our persecution consecrated you as the King of these shrines." Sri Krishna said: " I wish your happiness to be eternal, the result of many trials to which you exposed yourself. You were divinely guided in those trying moments when it was a question of life and death. May you be happy and rule the hearts of men of the vast Empire and leave an eternal name to posterity and reign in the Kingdom of Heaven! " Yudhisthira replied: " In everything that I did, do or shall in future do, success depends on you; you were, are and will be reflected there. You are the chief of the religious order I established." Saying this he embraced Sri Krishna and all the others one after the other. No sooner were the usual exchanges of formalities over with great sincerity than Draupadi burst into tears. She could not utter a word for some time, but at last she cried out: " Those cheerful and happy voices would have been quite fit and proper in times of prosperity. Poverty is no crime, but disgrace and

insult are rankling in my mind and appear to me worse than death. Why do you all come here to mock me and remind me of all these? I now welcome solitude and isolation. Good Heavens! leave me alone. I know not how to welcome you and what to say. Pray take no offence." She sat down motionless looking upon all who came with vacant eyes. They became more and more excited when, from the other side, greetings of welcome were made to her.

Seldom had mental and spiritual torpitude in the placid course of forest life received such a rude shock and impetus as was witnessed at the important meeting of the Pandavas with Sri Krishna and his relatives and friends. There are often moments of a cold, dreary and cheerless nature, like the visions of nightmares in sleep, for the wisest and best of human beings. Wise men and women learn more through feelings of sorrow than of joy. The persecutions of the Kurus proved to be blessings to the Pandavas. The spirit of God is within everybody. Men and women, young and old, are constantly in search of it, but are often misled. A human being who can see it demonstrated in another, becomes his disciple. The Pandavas and Draupadi were such disciples of self-denial and brought to light the great religious and spiritual teachings of the age. The spirit of God is demonstrated in virtue, and virtue in the guise of Yaksha came to examine the Pandavas; but only Yudhisthira succeeded in passing the great examination. There it is said that one becomes wise by serving the old; he cannot be considered alive, who does not offer food and drink to Gods, spirits of the dead ancestors, as well as to guests, servants and himself. The friend of a householder is his wife; his son is the soul of the man. When a wife and virtue agree with each other then all the three aspects of the happiness of domestic life—piety (Dharma), profit (Artha) and desire (Kama)—are fulfilled. This was the happy life Yudhisthira passed with his virtuous and good wife, Draupadi, followed by his obedient brothers, in the forest. He is the wealthiest man in the world who is not moved by anything agreeable or disagreeable in the past and future. Arguments lead to no definite conclusions for the Vedas, the Institutes of lawgivers and of great sages differ in their views. Nothing can be accepted as infallible. Truth about religion and duty is hidden in caves of darkness; the path is golden which is followed by the majority of wise men in the past. This was, in short, the lesson Yudhisthira gave to Draupadi in her great

sorrow during the forest life—which may be summarised as follows:—

"Oh Draupadi! grieve not in the manner you did. Have you forgotten the good advice of Kasyapa that the kings should not yield to anger and engage in war to bring ruin to the country by killing their subjects. He is foolish who is angry; but the learned man forgives even everyone who has insulted him. Forgiveness and humility constitute the eternal virtue. The sight of the prosperity of the Kurus and the sufferings due to our misfortune should not be the cause of your grief. You have heard from the mouths of the great sages the worst sufferings of the great Kings and Queens of the past, pious men and women. You have seen with your own eyes the powers of the great saints in the shrines and of the royal recluses in the hermitages. The devout penances and sacrifices which we have been practising, if they were fruitless, then they would not have been followed and advised by all good men of the age, generation after generation. Doubt not the ancient religion, followed and formulated by the great Kings and lawgivers, like Manu, Vasistha, etc. One should not trade in virtue for profit or good return. Desire, if renounced, makes one wealthy; but avarice makes a man poor indeed for all his wealth. Covetousness is an incurable disease and anger is an invincible enemy. Ignorance is grief, which is nothing but want of knowledge of one's duty. Patience is in the subjugation of the senses and charity lies in the protection of the needy. An Emperor of India installed with religious ceremonies is meant to do everything against the influence of the dark age which is demonstrated in the rule of wicked Kings and their success. The spirit of God is within everybody; and the appeal of the man who can see it within himself, is not made in vain. It is only in the great trials of life that the internal nature and true spirit of man and woman are disclosed. The blaze of passion is flung upon the natures of man and woman in order to show the greatness of divine nature."

Yudhisthira was the hero of the Mahabharata and a great asset to the ancient Kings of India in founding an Empire of justice, religion and truth. It was he who was said to have released his great forefather Nahusha, who had been translated to Heaven by his great acts but was hurled down again in the shape of a snake, as a punishment for transgressing the duties of a King in Heaven. Nahusha's release was effected by Yudhisthira in reminding him of the great truth of the religion of

the Hindus. Yajaṭi, the son of Nahusha, was saved from his fall from Heaven (on account of his vanity) by his four grandsons and his daughter Madhavi. The task of founding an Empire of Divine Love was thrust upon Sri Krishna, dwelling in the island of Dwarka, who displaced the great Narayana, the absolute God of the sages. Yudhistira and his wife Draupadi were the great followers of the Divine Love and faith which was reflected in Sri Krishna. Sri Krishna appeared to them in their great distress. God descends from Heaven to teach men on earth. Narada, the celestial sage, claimed the credit of establishing the worship of one exclusive God, Narayana. He preached the value of absolute monotheistic devotion (Ykantic worship). • It is said in the Mahabharata that Hari Gita and Narada Pancharatra were the two works of Narada which deal with the salvation of the soul by devotion to the supreme deity, Hari or Sri Krishna. The Mahabharata deals with religious merit (Dharma), worldly prosperity (Artha), the objects of desire (Kama), and the final emancipation (Moksha), but does not deal with Bhakti Yoga. The dramatic Mahabharata removes this desideratum. God is said to have been in existence in five different modes, namely, Para, Vyuha, Vibhava, Antaryamin and Idols. Para (or the highest) in which mode Parabrahmana lives is heaven (Vaikuntha) and is called Narayana. There is Vyuha in which Para himself assumes the four forms of Vasudeva, Samkarshana, Pradyumna and Aniruddha. Vibhava is ten Avataras. Antaryamin is the supreme soul which dwells in the heart and accompanies the individual soul, as seen by Yogis. Idols are made up of materials chosen by the worshipper; the worshipped dwells with a body not made up of matter. People meditate God as a single spirit and in the four aspects of Sat (existence), Chita (knowledge), Ananda (joy) and Atman (spirit). Gita speaks of Karmayoga, Jnanayoga and Bhaktiyoga; the first purifies the soul and aids in the acquisition of knowledge. Knowledge is " to know thyself," as an attribute of God Himself, different from Maya or Yama, Niyama, Titiksha, etc. All these were not spoken of in the Mahabharata but the Gita was included in it at a later period, when Bhakti worship had developed.

Draupadi was translated into the mystic love of Radha, who made the five Pandavas figuratively into one. The Supreme beatitude can only be attained through five stages of probation. Draupadi's Madhurya love was with Yudhisthira, Vatsalya with the other Pandavas, Santa with her parents, Dasya with the men

of the country to which she belonged, and she adopted Sakhya with Sri Krishna and was known by the name of Krishna. In Heaven above all were united not in actual absorption into the deity but in the mutual enjoyment of peace and love, face to face, to behold the eternal God of love and beauty.

Draupadi, as the Empress of India and wife of Yudhisthira, had to join her husband to prove to the world that her sense of duty was the best pledge and sign of the purity of her morals. Then no fire ordeal or opinion of the masses was found necessary to make her fit to sit by the Emperor, her consort, as was the case in the days of Rama Chandra.

A girl is the soil of the future generation and she must be protected by strict rules of society and law. In the military world the fortunes of men and women were so uncertain that, for emergency, policy and skilfulness were imperative. The true sources of happiness however depend upon the culture and religious feeling of man and woman, so the Hindu domestic relations between parents and children, husband and wife are all bound up in religious and spiritual ties. Women of those ages were all educated and cultured. They did not move or live within the narrow circle of domestic happiness and interests. There was nothing to prevent them moving beyond these narrow limits.

Draupadi became the great heroine of the Dramatic Mahabharata. All the trials and persecutions of Draupadi and her great unselfish devotion to the cause of the country entitled her to be ranked as the great deliverer of the nation. It would seem as if from the very first day of her marriage sorrow had elected her for its own. She had parents, husband and relations quite capable of making her happy, but she had been persecuted and traduced in their very presence by the curious false report of her marriage which made her an object of ridicule in the Kuru Court. There she appealed to the elders in vain, and thereafter to her husband Yudhisthira and Sri Krishna (in the Vana Parvana). She was not an ordinary woman or princess. Pure in soul and body, she patiently bore all the indignities and insults for reasons of state policy, and she never attempted to take her own life or that of another by uttering a curse. King and country became integral parts of her existence. She sacrificed everything for the good of the country and nation and was, in the true sense, a Nationalist woman of the age, fully entitled to sit by the side of an Emperor like Yudhisthira and take part in all the religious ceremonies of that great Emperor for the purification of soul and mind. Few nations can know

what it is to have a true Queen's love to light up the darkness of a throne. The tempest of conflicting emotions in the human heart of an ideal Emperor is set at rest when a conscientious Queen sits by him; she saved the Empire from a fall and prevented war after her Svayamvara marriage by agreeing to put up with the false report that she was the wife of five husbands.

The real cause of Yudhisthira's retirement was not the loss of his stakes at dice-play; and the text of the Mahabharata* itself bears this out:—

"O Draupadi! our grandfather, the son of Santanu, worshipped peace as well as Krishna, the son of Devaki. The preceptor and Vidura (known as Kshattwa) both speak of peace; Kripa as well as Sanjaya also speak of peace. Somadatta, Yujutsu and Drona's son as well as our grandfather Vyasa daily speak of peace. Being led by all these towards peace, the King will return to us the kingdom; if he yields to temptation he will meet with destruction. A dreadful time has set in which will bring misfortune to the Bharatas; for sometime this has been a settled conclusion, O fair lady! Durjodhana does not deserve the kingdom and therefore he does not know forgiveness; I deserve it and therefore forgiveness has taken possession of me. Forgiveness and humility are the qualities of the self-controlled man and constitute the eternal virtue; and I shall therefore adopt them." Durjodhana sought crown and fortune for his own personal ambition and enjoyment only. He was possessed of very delicate attractions of personal beauty of features and form and of undoubted individual charm of manners which captivated the hearts of Bhisma, Drona, Kripa and others. Money and throne seemed to be the Devil's master-keys to command the hearts of those men. Poor Durjodhana! He purchased every man with a round sum either in hard cash or by offering the throne of a Kingdom, but had done nothing for himself—his wretched soul remained what it was, his physical and mental ailments troubled him throughout and he was utterly blind about his own soul. Gold and power cannot buy everything in the world. He tried to make true things take a second place to sham ones; and preferred the glare of court life to all true radiance of happy solitude and peace. His energy and temperament fluctuated only with the hopes of material gain, and his character rapidly hardened into that of a man of the world, for whom all thought about the unseen Providence was

* **Vana Parvana, Chap. XXIX, Verses 46-62.**

not worthy of a moment's consideration. He had behind him a retinue of Kings of India who had no idea of their own responsibilities. His heart was as light as that of the bird singing in the sky. He never felt the necessity of hard work, not even to achieve his successes. This attracted the world's attention; for he had nothing more to wish for in the matter of worldly success.

To worship an unproved and merely imaginary identity as God did not appeal to him. He sneered and mocked at religion and sentiment. The true conception of Satan was exemplified in Durjodhana and better than it was given by Milton in Paradise Lost.

Chapter XV.

Virtue and Revival of Religious Rites.

It cannot be denied that this great Indian epic has a historical background of great value; it portrays the geographical development of ancient civilisation from certain centres to all over India. It is in the ancient shrines that memories and monuments of great historical events were recorded, for they mark the birthplaces of great sages, the hermitages of great philosophers or poets, the places where the great Kings performed their sacrifices, were crowned or breathed their last. The visits of the Pandavas and the great Rama Chandra in his exile, as described in the two Indian epics, demonstrate the imperative duties of Kings of those days. It seems that, to restore those shrines and to pay tribute to the pious memories of the great men of India who were all respected and honoured as the pioneers of religious, political and social reforms, was a work of great merit as well as a duty.

The great men who had struggled in the past for the regeneration of a nation had gone to everlasting rest, leaving their work unfinished. Those who would follow their work had to draw inspiration from the elders and wisemen of the age as to the way in which they could perpetuate the memories of their great predecessors. The forgotten past of great saints, heroes and martyrs contained events which were nothing less than miracles or legendary histories. What a long time ago it was when they lived, moved and had their being! The great Puranas of the Hindus describe the first creation of the world and the religious scripture of the West does the same. There is some resemblance in the two accounts. They have little bearing on the plots of the great Indian epics, except on certain important events. They give important clues to the first migration which took place—its place of origin and final destination—to the origin of the name of India and to the lives of the great sages—where they became famous, their relationship with the great Kings, and their disciples who kept up the great traditions of their fame and in many cases overshadowed them altogether. The sages left unstained their hermitages where they first found

the divine light of Heaven, for which people called them holy. They did not seek the jewels of the earth in the mines below or the pearls of the seas, but sought faith in sacred shrines.

There was a time when a great woman, with brow serene, high and fearless, lit by her deep love, felt disgraced at the great sacrifice of her father Daksha Prajapati for the insult to her beloved husband, Siva; and she sacrificed her life, thus earning the epithet of Sati.

There was a very learned sage, Lomasha, at the head of the pilgrim Pandava brothers who entertained no malice towards anyone. These brothers were very eager to finish the great work before them and to bind up the wounds in the heart of a great nation; they aimed at a union of India under one ideal Emperor and Empress, which would be beneficial to all. The new birth of freedom under one God, one religion and one uniform ideal life was the aim and object with which the visit of Yudhisthira with his brothers and wife to the ancient shrines of India was undertaken.

Yudhisthira could have recovered the Empire from the Kurus by strength of arms and strategy, but then he could not have accomplished the great work he had in view. It became very clear from the discussions between Sri Krishna, Balarama and the Yadava Satyaki, and from the speech of Yudhisthira at the end. Balarama exclaimed :—" O Krishna! How is it that the wicked Durjodhana is in prosperity and ruling the earth and the pious Yudhisthira is suffering great misery in the forest with his virtuous wife and good brothers of matchless valour and power? It will lead people to consider that a sinful man is more prosperous than a virtuous man. How is it that the old King Dhritarastra, Bhisma, Kripa and Drona could be party to all sorts of disgraceful acts so openly before all? What a shame it is that Draupadi, the model of virtuous life, brought up in the lap of luxury, should at last be reduced to this miserable condition of life, which is devoid of all earthly comfort and ease. The Pandavas are famous for pursuing the four objects of human life; yet they are unjustly punished in this way; this will be undoubtedly very perplexing to other human beings. The lean and poor condition of the Pandavas and Draupadi has brought tears to the eyes of all present here. O Sri Krishna, that you can have remained unmoved in any way up to now!" Sri Krishna said to Satyaki :—" Yudhisthira does not like to recover the land and possessions by the efforts and prowess of others. He will not give up his vow."

Yudhisthira declared that it was not surprising that they all should be very anxious to right the wrong; but everything must be done in good time. "Truth has been the life and soul of my sovereignty. You will see courage and prowess in the defeat of Durjodhana, when the proper time for doing so comes. Let the heroes of the Dasarah race go back to their homes. I shall hope to see you happily assembled together again in the near future." Neither Sri Krishna nor Yudhisthira could approve of the proposal of Satyaki to place Abhimanyu on the throne till the completion of Yudhisthira's Brahmacharya, during which time Durjodhana would be defeated by the armies of the Dasarah race.

It can be seen from the text of the Mahabharata* that the visit to sacred shrines was undertaken by people who were unable to perform costly sacrifices or the proper religious observances. A mere visit to sacred shrines does not entitle a pilgrim to religious merit; he has to follow certain observances, fasting or offering oblations to the *manes* of his departed forefathers. It was in fact a mode of worship with the pious Hindus which cleansed the mind from sorrow and grief, to hear the stories of great men at the very monuments with which their memories were associated. It was a sure sign of great faith in the religion of the Hindus.

There was no bar to marriage between agnates of the Kshatriya family of Kings; and any intermarriage between the Brahmans, the Kshatriyas and the Vyasas did not interfere with the succession to the throne. Considerations of merit, devotion and faith in the Hindu religion and morality were taken into account in the great question of succession to the throne. These three castes were honoured with a second birth and were called Dwija, and freely inter-mingled; it was not until after the Buddhist upheaval that the Hindu caste system was connected with the accident of birth and not with merit and culture; rigidity first came with the rise of Brahminism†. The antagonistic religious faiths in India made it an important question with the Kings and Queens to pay their respects to the religious shrines so that the mass might be guided by their examples in later days.

In the Rig Veda (1.38.5) the path of Yama is mentioned. He is originally said to have been the ruler of the dead forefathers

* Vana Parvana, Chapter LXXXII, Verse 14.

† The memorable horse sacrifice of Pushyamitra marked this early stage in the Brahmanical reaction which was fully developed in the reigns of Samundra Gupta and his successors.

of Kings. The funeral ceremonies of the Vedic Indians used to be connected with a cow (Anustarani) which was supposed to carry the departed soul across the river Vaitarani. Pitriyana and Devayana were the bridges across this river Vaitarani which would lead the departed soul of a human being to heaven as a reward for his piety. In the Anu Gita* of the Mahabharata distinct mention is made of the two bridges of virtue and piety which led to Heaven, and in the Vana Parvan† Yudhisthira, the great Emperor of virtue, went to the sacred shrine of Vaitarani with his wife Draupadi to offer oblations to the *manes* of his forefathers. Yudhisthira heard the story of the great fight between Parasurama and King Kartabiryarjuna, who killed Parasurama's father; to avenge this great wrong the powerful Parasurama performed the great ceremony of offering the blood of the Kshatriyas who had been killed instead of the sacred water of rivers, and it took place at Kurukshettra. But Kasyapa made him perform a sacrifice at the sacred place of Vaitarani and exiled him from the civilised limit of ancient India. Yudhisthira went to the hermitage of Visvamitra at Badrikasrama. This royal sage became famous by becoming a Brahman through his austerities; but at a later period this was ascribed to an exchange of great boons with the sage Bhrigu to whom it was granted in return that his descendants should be blessed with fit and able sons. Parasurama became a Kshatriya Emperor who gave away the whole empire to his priest Kasyapa; and Visvamitra became a priest of King Janaka of Mithila, leaving his Kingdom and power.

The source of religious perfection in ancient India, as demonstrated in the forest life of the Pandavas, is found in the Atharva Veda, verse XII:

> "Truth, high and potent, lo! the consecrating rite,
> Fervour, Brahma and sacrifice uphold the Earth."

The birth of Sri Krishna took place at Mathura, the abode of the Asura Madhu, and the city of Mathura was founded by King Rama Chandra's brother, Satrughana, after killing Madhu's son, King Labena.

In the Vedic hymns the word Arya occurs frequently as a national name of honour for those who worshipped the God of the Brahmanas, as opposed to their enemies, the Dasyus. The abode of the Aryas was called Aryavarta; and the institutes of Manu give out that the tract of land lying between the eastern and western seas, including the lands between the Vindhya and

* Asvamedha Parvana, Chap. XX.
† Chap. CXIV, Verse 13.

the Himalaya, was called Aryavarta. This gives an important clue to the first civilisation in India. Man takes his shape and pursuits from the character of the land in which he is born. The Pandavas were born and brought up in the Himalayas and were true Aryans. In India people are known by the name of the country in which they are born. Everyone born in the Brahmarshidhesa, which included Kurukshettra, Matsya, Panchala, Surasena, was given the credit in the Manu Samhita of being an example of good conduct. Brahmavarta was between the rivers Saraswati and Drishadvati. The people of that place were regarded as perfect for ages. This speaks of the power of Brahmanism in the institutes of Manu. It is also said there that the country where black antelopes were found roaming about should be naturally taken as a country fit for sacrifice. It is for this reason that the Pandavas went to the forest to perform sacrifices and observe vows in the sacred shrines of India. The Kings and sages of the past, as well as the eminent Vaisyas, were the authors of Vedic hymns and were well praised. Visvamitra was called the Bharatarshabha, the leader of the Bharatas*. There are five vedas of Brahma in which he performed sacrifices, at Prayaga, Gaya, Jaipur (Biraja), Samanta Panchaka (Kurukshettra) and Puskara (Ajmere).

Sri Krishna enlightened Arjuna in the Drona Parvan†. God divided himself into four parts for the welfare of all concerned. One part is engaged in practising ascetic austerities, the second keeps an eye over the good and bad deeds performed by all in the world, the third is engaged in the works of humanity to preserve the world and the fourth, Narayana, retires in a sleep extending over thousands of years and awakes at the end of the great cycle.

One cannot overlook that the Udyoga Parvan contains the Bhagavata-yana which aimed at avoiding the war of unrighteousness. It is evident that in the plot portion of the Mahabharata there are four Yanas or paths of success, *i.e.*, Pitri-yana, Deva-yana, Dharma-yana and Bhagavata-yana. The Pandavas were the leaders of the four paths of success in human life on earth. It was for this reason that the great war of Kurukshettra was described as the war of virtue, *i.e.*, to declare the glory of the virtuous man and woman who were enthroned in the great Horse sacrifice. The Ramayana cannot be called perfect in this respect, as the great Rama Chandra performed the sacri-

* Sankhayana Santasutra. Chap. XV (25).
† Chap. XXIX, Verses 23-27.

fice without the living Sita but only with her golden image by his side; for she had disappeared into the earth from whence she came, in disgrace and in great grief. There is another interpretation of the four forms of Virtuous God in the Mahabharata*: "Without a combination of the five principal elements, nobody can ever be formed. Without, again, the entrance of the Individual Soul into the body, the mind living within it cannot cause it to move and act. He that enters the body is possessed of great power and is called Individual. He is known also by other names, *viz.*, Shesha and Sankarshana. He who takes his rise from that Sankarshana, by his own acts, Sanatkumara, and in whom all creatures merge when the universal dissolution sets in, is the Mind of all creatures and is called by the name of Praddyumna. From Him originated He who is the Creator, and who is both Cause and Effect. From this last, everything, *viz.*, the mobile and immobile universe, originates. This One is called Aniruddha. He is otherwise called Ishana and He is manifest in all deeds. The illustrious one, *viz.*, Vasudeva, who is called Kshetrajna (Soul) and who is freed from qualities, should, O King of Kings, be known as the powerful Sankarshana, when He takes birth as (Individual Soul). From Sankarshana originates Praddyumna who is called 'Mind-begotten.' From Praddyumna is He who is Aniruddha. He is Consciousness, He is Ishwara (Supreme Lord)". The story of King Uparichara, with which the Bharata Samhita begins, is recited; how he dropped down through the curse of the Brahmans and how he ascended to Heaven on the wings of Suparna, the bird Garuda, by worship of Vishnu Narayana (Chapter CCCXXVIII). This shows the development of worship in the succeeding ages in ancient India. The story of Uparichara does not form part of Mahabharata* which stands for the cult of righteousness and for the Divine Love of Sri Krishna.

The energy of the Pandavas was directed by the illustrious Vyasa himself to the acquisition of virtue, on which real prosperity, satiation of desires and success in life depend very much. The foolish men desire to be successful by deceitful means, abandoning virtue, and the vulgar youth are more or less actuated to do anything for sport and for a fleeting sense of pleasure. All these faults have been beautifully portrayed in the adventures of Ghosha Jatra and the disgrace of Jayadratha.

The institutes of Manu and the Mahabharata recited that Kings Vena, Nahusa, Sudasa, Prithu and Manu regained their

* Shanti Parvana, Chap. CCCXL.

kingdoms through humility. Likewise Kuvera obtained wealth and opulence and Viswamitra the status of Brahmin through humility*. The Earth owed its glory and existence to the good rule of Prithu and received the name of Prithivi from that King. All the principles of social, religious and spiritual organisation were at first in the hands of the Brahmin lawgivers, the learned sages and great priests of Kings.

The Vedas and Vedic performances were the source of Hinduism, and other developments were the growth of time and civilisation. They found that all the spirits of Heaven and Earth were the sincere followers of Hinduism. India then came to be better known as Hindusthan, or the abode of the Hindus.

The most important fact in the Vana Parvana seems to have been the appearance of the God of Justice (Dharma) and Virtue, in the guise of Yaksha, as a great dramatis persona to test the Pandavas so far as their religious teachings and methods of achieving success were concerned. None but Yudhisthira succeeded in passing this great examination. Yaksha said that he who sacrificed virtue was himself destroyed, and whosoever preserved it became immortal. Fame, truth, self-control, purity, modesty, steadiness, simplicity, charity, asceticism and Brahmacharya are the sources of the great strength of virtue. This is how Yaksha warned him. The re-birth of the four Pandavas by the blessings of Yaksha (Virtue) was through initiation in the basic principles of virtue which are worthy of notice and may be briefly stated as follows:—

"Abstention from cruelty is superior to both profit and desire." The Institutes of Manu say that the "sense of virtue germinates in those who are not attached to desire and wealth"†. Those were denounced who are covetous of wealth, who carry cloaks of religion and dissemble themselves, like cats, to decoy their prey out of its stronghold in order to pounce upon it with all the native fury of their soul. They are deceitful, arrogant, envious, who cannot bear to hear others praised but always try to snub all men. They are called Vidalavrataka. Those who, in order to gain their ends, conceal their ferocious purpose and, with eyes cast down, roam about in deceit and falsehood, like cranes, are called Vaka-vrati‡.

The granting of the boons of Virtue to Yudhisthira seems to

* Manu Samhita, Chap. VII, Verses 41-42.
† Chap. II, Verse 13.
‡ Chap. IV, Verses 95-96.

have been an important event in Pouranic mythology, for it is said that virtue in the form of a deer carried off the firesticks of a Brahmana who complained to the good Emperor Yudhisthira and were recovered by him. It meant that the religious sacrifices in the forest were then revived by Yudhisthira. There was another boon relating to Yudhisthira that he, his brothers and his wife might remain *incognito* during the thirteenth year. Bhisma and Drona described the object of Yudhisthira's birth and Draupadi's austerities in the forest life as follows :—

"King Pandu always prayed for Yudhisthira's courage, might and truth and Kunti for his highmindedness and liberality. Gods blessed them with Yudhisthira by the offerings with Shaha and Soadha in the Sraddha sacrifices".* This has been borne out by Kunti's version†. In the Bhisma Parvana, Sri Krishna is said to have been identified with virtue as the God to worship for glory and success in life; the appropriate part reads as follows :—

"Where there is piety, there are glory and beauty. Where there is modesty, there are intelligence and prosperity. Where there is righteousness, there is Sri Krishna. Where there is Sri Krishna, there is victory."

Kunti appealed to Sri Krishna in the name of virtue (Dharma) in the Udyoga Parvan as follows :—

"I doubt not the eventual truth of the predictions at the birth of my sons about their great achievements, their glories and success‡. If there be virtue on earth the voices of heaven will be fulfilled. I know in our family you are looked upon as a great God attached to virtue and truth. You are Brahma and saviour in person and everything depends on you."§

Sri Krishna was born as the son of Dharma and was distinguished by the name of Dharmaja‖. It cannot be overlooked that Yudhisthira is said to be the great tree of virtue and religion in the table of contents¶. This refers to Yajnavalkya's revision of the dramatic Mahabharata, as in the Samhita the roots of the great tree of virtue and religion are found to refer to the great sages**. This is exactly what is said in the above table of contents which has been referred to :—

"Krishna, Brahma and Brahmanas are the roots of the great tree of virtue and religion."

* Shanti Parvana, Chap. LXXV, Verses 23-24.
† Chap. CXXXII, Verse 23.
‡ Udyoga Parvana, Chap. XC, Verses 67-68.
§ Ibid Verses 103-4.
‖ Shanti Parvana, Chap. CCXLIII, Verse 103.
¶ Adi Parvana, Chap. I, Verse 109.
** Chap. III, Verse 186.

Drona described the great austerities of Yudhisthira and Draupadi as follows:—

"How can you defeat Yudhisthira, the hero of rigid austerities for whose side the wise self-controlled Brahmanas have declared themselves? How will you defeat that son of Pandu whose adviser is Sri Krishna and whose brothers are Bhima, Arjuna and others, the foremost of all wielders of weapons? How can you defeat Yudhisthira for whose victory his virtuous Queen, Empress Draupadi, undertook austere asceticism?"*

Kunti was the ideal mother of the Pandavas who sent a message to her sons through Sri Krishna in the Vidula-Sanjaya discourse to ensure success and victory. Draupadi was the great heroine and the example of a good housewife, dearer to Kunti than her own sons, for her great virtue and wisdom made the Pandavas pull together in the worst trials and privations and in the practice of religious austerities for the attainment of success. The unjust and cruel persecutions of the Kurus had, after all, made the Pandavas more combined than before.

The Pravasa, one of the great sacred shrines of India, was famous for the final disappearance of Sri Krishna, and there the Pandavas met with Sri Krishna and the Yadava warriors, headed by Balarama, the great Avatar of the Age. Their blessings and congratulations were of great importance to the Pandavas and Draupadi.

* Udyoga Parvana, Chap. CXXXIX, Verses 17-18.

Chapter XVI.

The Wicked Kichaka's Death.

> " Fiction gives to mankind what history denies and in some measure satisfies the mind with shadows when it cannot enjoy the substance."—*Bacon.*

The story of the Pandavas was told in the Virata Parvan with great sorrow and dread; for the sentence of another thirteen years' exile would be pronounced upon them if they could not pass the thirteenth year incognito. It was nowhere suggested or said in the text of the Mahabharata that the Pandavas, though very well known to the general public, were so altered by their severe austerities and privations in the past twelve years as to be able to go unrecognised by their friends and relations in the Court of Virata or by the King himself. It seemed that all thoughts were bent upon contriving some means for their safety and nothing less than the boons of Virtue and the Goddess Durga in person were necessary for the purpose. The Pandavas had the benefit of the teaching of the great sages in the forest and one of them was Markandeya, the author of the Purana which contains the odes to Durga and describes her great power of illusion which she practised in the killing of the great Asuras whom neither the Gods nor their King Indra could kill. In the great war described in the Chandi, the Asuras, famous for the practice of the weapons of illusion, were taken aback and killed through the deceptive tricks of Maya. The boons of Durga and Virtue gave the Pandavas strength and faith to pass the thirteenth year in the kingdom of King Virata and not in the forest. They came to this resolution after the meeting with the Yadavas and it would not be wrong to infer that they were consulted about it. The God and Goddess never showed their power to their devotees, but the earnestness, knowledge and concentration of will of the devotees helped them to realise the presence of that great power. Thus the power of virtue or the form of the presiding Goddess Durga in Maya (illusion) was felt. Divine Love never brings defeat, disgrace or sorrow, but everlasting peace, to those that worship it.

"Just Heaven is not satisfied with costly gift,
Offered in hope of future recompense,
As with the merest trifle set apart
From honest of arms, and sanctified by Faith."
—*Mahabharata.*

Whatever there is, terrible or beautiful, in the events of a man's past life which shakes up his soul, it is often remembered in the thoughts of mankind long after. This helped, to a great extent, the great King and Queen to make the nation and race undergo the great hardships and persecutions of the wicked world with patience by their own great examples and sufferings. The only lasting love is that which is free from selfish ends. It was for this the Pandavas had to pass the last one year in disguise. There was something supernatural and spiritual, and not merely human, in the Virata Parvan which justified its name. That Yudhisthira, who was installed on the throne of Indraprastha as the ideal Emperor of India, should now agree to pass as a courtier of the King of Virata, cannot be called ordinary. The royalties of Europe travel incognito with false names but they never so pass their time when they are deprived of their kingdoms and are waiting for the proper time to recover them. The change of name, of course, in that case does not mean anything wrong, but it is just to protect their own persons from mischief. But the Pandavas passed the twelve years in the practice of the religious vows of the Hindus which were to ensure success in life after the blessings and boons of the Goddess Durga, and in those years they waited and looked for an opportunity to exploit their great acquisition of knowledge and attainments to the best advantage and by those they could discover their true identities to the people at large. The Pandavas practised in silence what they learned from the sages. They were not uncultured men of the day who had no thoughts for the present and future—all the important events of life are in the present as well as in the future; on these present events were their whole energies concentrated. They were all independent citizens of a Kingdom and, as such, used to visit the Court of the King of Virata and soon became very friendly with that King. What else could be more welcome and consoling than this—that they who were once so loved and distinguished came to the country to save it from the cruel clutches of the savage Kichaka, whose chief assumed the control of a kingdom which once was the ideal centre of civilisation. Kichaka was the commander-in-chief and brother-in-law of the King of Virata, and the people suffered very much

from his unlawful acts over which the King could not exercise his legitimate right, out of fear and close relationship. The forgotten past was a time of miracles, of great strength and of chastity. Tradition has built up the fame of great men and women to such colossal proportions that one can hardly believe their achievements now as true. It has reached the realm of legendary fable. Nevertheless the great hero and heroine of the age were either the great martyrs or messengers of love, faith, genius and courage. Some defy the stories and make God descend on Earth to help them out of their difficulties. This is even now believed by the Orthodox Hindus in India.

The name Bharatavarsa owed its origin to a King Bharata whose installation ceremony as Emperor of India took place at Kardamila on the river Samanga; the sacred water of this river purged* Indra from the sin of killing Vritta and enabled him to regain heaven, his Kingdom. The daughter of Indra, Jayanti, was married to Bharata, son of Rishava. Rishava's father, Navi, was married to Maru Devi and was installed on the throne in Brahmavarta. Bharatavarsa and Brahmavarta represent respectively the ancient name of India and one of its civilised subdivisions. The royal sage Rishava later retired from the kingdom into the Himalayas, one of the peaks of which received his name. He is described as Debarshava Purasharshava, an Avatar of God. Yudhisthira approached this great royal sage, Rishava, when he was disappointed at the conduct of Durjodhana—an incident which is misplaced in the Shanti Parvana.† Yudhisthira founded the capital Indraprastha just after the forest of Khandavaprastha was cleared and the Vedic God, Indra, was humiliated; at the same time he proclaimed the greatness of Sri Krishna and the prowess of Arjuna. The famous ancient shrine of Gaya owed its name to the powerful Asura, Gayasura, who was killed by God Vishnu. The greatness of King Rama Chandra was declared after the forest life of Dandakaranya and the death of the powerful Ravana. The cruel Parasurama was banished by the famous sage Kasyapa to Surat (Surparakakshettra). Mahishmati, on the right bank of the river Narbada, forty miles south of Indore, was the capital of the Haihaya King, Kartabiryarjuna, who was killed by Parasurama. It will thus appear that this Indian epic is a sort of post-vedic mythology with a whole train of confused and conflicting legends, expanding the incidents and circumstances to

* Vana Parvana, Chap. CXXXIV.
† Chapter CXXVII.

embrace certain phases of Hinduism and the evolution of the caste system. The combat of Indrà with the demon Vritta is mentioned in the Rig Veda; it found place in the Vana and Shanti Parvans of the Mahabharata.

The King of Virata represented an ancient family of Kings and his relationship with the sister of Kichaka in a Hindu marriage was rather mysterious and strange and very hard to accept as the truth. The Virata Parvana seems to be a veritable comedy of errors. It begins with this marriage relation of a Kshatriya King with the sister of a Kichaka Chief. The features and the majestic appearance of the Pandavas were well known to the King of Virata who went to the Rajasuya sacrifice of Yudhisthira and took an important part in that great function. It would be next to impossible for them to pass one year in the Court of that King in disguise. Never have so many errors ever been written—not even in that classic of fiction, Shakespeare's Comedy of Errors. It has to be believed, however; apparently it was made practicable by the boons of Virtue and of the Goddess Durga.

The name of the kingdom of King Virata is associated in Pouranic mythology with the first Avatar, Matsya; and the great progenitor of this line of Kings was Uparichara Basuhoma with whose account the Mahabharata began. The Matsya country was within that division of Manu called Brahmarshi, famous for the good conduct of its people. A further error seems to have been that the great Epic progenitor, Uparichara Basuhoma, was the progenitor of the Magadha and Matsya dynasties of Kings and also of the Kurus through his daughter. It was said that King Uparichara went out on a hunting expedition to kill an animal which was to be an offering in the sraddha of his forefather; but in the hunting expedition he fell in love with a beautiful water-nymph, Adrika, who gave birth to a son and a daughter who were recovered from the belly of a fish by a fisherman. He gave them as presents to the same King, being surprised by their wonderful births and thinking that he would receive handsome presents from him. The son was placed on the throne of a kingdom known by the name of Matsya, and the daughter was left to be brought up by the fisherman; she was called Matsyagandha and afterwards named Satyabati, later becoming the mother of the illustrious Vyasa, the author of the Mahabharata and the Puranas, and the queen of King Santanu and step-mother of Bhisma. The sacred river Ganges was said to be the mother of Bhisma. These water-nymphs and this river were always said to be the mothers

of the fictitious characters in the Epic. It cannot be overlooked that the Virata Parvan is read even now at the funeral ceremony of sraddha. There are grounds to suppose that the country of Matsya owed its name to the incident of the birth of King Matsya, the son of Uparichara Basuhoma of Maghadha, as the birth and later developments had a historical background in the history of India. The birth of the first King Prithu, son of Vena, was equally mysterious. The Brahmanas killed Vena by the Kusa grass used in the sacrifice and from the thigh of the body of Vena raised Prithu, who was the first to be declared King of India. The name of Prithivi was derived from him. The name of the Kshatriyas originated from the great devotion of Kings to the social and religious advancement of their subjects. The Nishadas and Sutas were distinct classes of men created by King Prithu. The Sutas and Magadhas were the bards of India and lived in Bengal and Magadha.* In the Purusha Sukta of the Rig Veda the Vaisyas are said to have come out of the thighs, the Kshatriya from the hands, the Brahmanas from the mouth and the Sudras from the feet. This has been wrongly interpreted in support of a hereditary caste system in India. In the Atharva Veda (IX. 20. XIX. 62. 1) Sudra and Arya are meant to express the whole of mankind. The Puranas demonstrate the scientific evolution theory in the Avatars of God and the great sages like Narada, Vasistha and Visvamitra. The country of Matsya was the southern part of Tirhut, including Vaisali. The territories of the Matsyas, Kurus, Panchalas and Surasenas were called the Brahmarshi Desa, the country of the holy sages.

The great changes in men's conceptions of duties, problems of life and divinity were all discussed in the learned assembly of sages and those who excelled among them were greatly rewarded by the King with honours and titles like Devarshi, Brahmarshi and Maharshi. The operations of laws and customs were from time to time varied and altered with their consent, first had and obtained there, and afterwards approved of by the great assembly of Kings who were present. Any new doctrine would be either approved of or denounced there. The discourse between Kapila and Syuma Rashmi in the invitation hall of the guests of the great King Nahusa, the progenitor of the Pandavas, and the protest by Kapila against the inhumanity of kings in celebrating the five sacrifices of the day, especially the killing of horses in the horse sacrifice, for the sake of

* Shanti Parvana, Chap. LIX, Verses 94-95.

acquiring merit by religious services and in entertaining guests with the flesh of cows, marked the age in which abstention from slaughter of any kind became the best of all virtues. Simultaneously in the kingdom of Magadha it began with the sacrifice of King Uparichara Basuhoma at the instance of his priest Vasistha, the forefather of Vyasa. Nimi, the first King of Videha, also had Vasistha as his priest. Vasistha went to perform a sacrifice of Indra and asked Nimi to wait for his return. Nimi did not do so, but engaged another priest and performed the sacrifice. Vasistha on his return found out what had happened and cursed Nimi. Nimi did not spare Vasistha—Vasistha then became bodiless by the curse and in his rebirth was known as Mitravaruna. Vasistha was also a priest of the Sudra Kings of the North Panchala. Vasistha and Agastya were the two very old vedic sages born of Urvasi. Siva, who had the form of Varuna, adopted Bhrigu as his son and the Bhargavas were famous as Varunas. Agni took Angiras and was known as Agneya. They are all mythical sages. They are neither Devarshi, Maharshi nor Brahmarshi. Their influence cannot have been of much consequence in Brahmarshi Desa.

Uparichara Basuhoma was the fourth successor from Kuru's son, Sudhanvan, who conquered the kingdom of Cedi, which belonged to the Yadavas, and for this feat he obtained the title Caidyoparicara, ' the overcomer of the Caidyas.' He also subdued and annexed the adjoining countries as far as Magadha. Basuhoma it was who conquered and founded anew the kingdoms of Cedi and Magadha. Thus it appears clear that the King of Matsya was the heir of great opulence and power. Virata had a splendid stock of cows which formed then the best wealth of a King. Gold and silver currency was not productive like cows and other domestic animals. Horses, camels and elephants were largely used in the transporting of goods and the drawing of chariots in war. Sri Krishna was brought up in the family of the Vaisyas and used to take several kinds of milk preparations which were thenceforth introduced amongst the Kshatriyas, as he married so many princesses of India. Kichaka was not actually the brother of the queen of King Virata, he was honoured with a title of relationship to the King. The Pandavas and the great Sri Krishna and the general body of Kings with their priests would not have consented to such an alliance if Kichaka had been really the brother of the queen. The fact seemed to have been that Kichaka was the greatest power in the Kingdom of Virata and the real king was

only King 'de jure.' The Queen of Virata sent Draupadi to Kichaka's place to fetch certain things in order to fulfil the desire of her brother, Kichaka. The wicked Kichaka is said to have kicked Draupadi in the presence of Yudhisthira in the Court of Virata. All these must have been the fruits of the blessed imagination of the Kuru Court for they revelled in such incidents in order to cry down the Pandavas. These incidents were of no use to Vyasa in explaining the teachings of the Vedas. How ridiculous that Arjuna should be a dancing master (and therefore an eunuch) to Uttara, his daughter-in-law—Arjuna, who visited Heaven and killed Asuras, which even the King of Heaven could not do! All these could not but be the blessed imagination of the rhapsodists who were out to amuse the royal audience in order to be rewarded with rich presents for provoking their laughter and ridiculing their enemies. It is more the manner in which this superstition has been degraded than its intrinsic absurdity that has brought it into contempt. There is nothing in the whole conception which could elevate more the imagination or more tenderly affect the heart. The comedy of errors which followed Siva's boon to Draupadi of five husbands in place of one is remarkable; and yet the significance of the idea is equally so. Bhima killed Kichaka for his evil intentions towards Draupadi, and became the leader of the forces of the Virata Kingdom instead of a cook or a gladiator, as has been alleged. Bhima after killing Kichaka said that he was absolved from the debt he owed to his elder brother Yudhisthira. It proves beyond the shadow of a doubt that Draupadi was the wife of Yudhisthira only.* Kichaka was the Commander-in-Chief of the King of Virata and Bhima had to fight with Kichaka's followers before he could take possession of the army. Draupadi's piety and virtuous conduct became the subject matter of talk everywhere. It was said that Kichaka was killed a fortnight before the completion of the thirteenth year. In the progress of time Yudhisthira and his brothers facilitated civilisation and freed countries from the undesirable influences of men like Kichaka, Baka and Hidimba, the powerful heads of tribes who usurped the thrones of real Kings and persecuted men. Bhima was instrumental in these acts of regeneration. The natives of the Matsya Kingdom were happy as they had been saved from the hands of the cruel Kichaka and his followers, members of a powerful hill tribe.

* Virata Parvan, Chap. XXII, Verse 79.

The struggle for existence and indulgence in the pleasures of the senses cannot make a man happy and successful in life; and the great mission with which he was born is not fulfilled. No wild beast, however ferocious, no treacherous venomous serpent can be more cruel and wicked in its inborn incliriations than a human being who is nursing in his breast selfishness and ambition which betray his worst nature to others. If a child with such inclinations ever lives to grow up, it will forget the man responsible for its birth, who supplied it with all the necessities of existence and guarded it with great care, and the woman who supplied it with the milk of her breast. Uncultured men and women are always the same wild children of Nature, tired of one toy of pleasure and crying for another, and so on until the end. Such was the case with Kichaka who met his fearful doom when he had made the fatal mistake of clasping the alleged Draupadi in amorous glee at the dead of night at the appointed place and found to his great surprise the cruel hands of death in Bhima. The fearful, mutilated dead body of Kichaka reduced into a ball of flesh was found in the morning by the people, who had heard the cry of the dying Kichaka at the dead of night but had not dared to venture out of their homes. People were filled with terror upon seeing that fearful mangled body of Kichaka—so like a tortoise; this similarity has passed into a proverb and is even now used in common parlance. The Kichakas, who were said to be the sons of the Sutas, went to the King of Virata, demanding the death sentence of Draupadi as they heard that Kichaka was killed by an unknown Gandharva or God who espoused her cause. Draupadi was rescued by the powerful Bhima from the cremation ground where Kichaka's funeral pyre had been placed; it had been intended by the Kichakas that she should adorn their chief's funeral and should be thrown alive into the flames. Eventually the vicious and wicked Kichaka, the reputed ravisher of the beautiful wives of soldiers, was alone burnt to ashes. All were very happy and pleased at heart.

It fits in admirably with the great Comedy of Errors in the Virata Parvan that the Sun God was called upon by Draupadi to protect her person from the cruel hands of the wicked Kichaka for that deity had been accused of violating the modesty of her mother-in-law, Kunti, before her marriage and of being the father of Karna who was actually a Suta.

Yudhisthira never forsook his duties as an Emperor of India even in his retirement in the forest to observe religious vows.

He never failed to render help, even to his persecutors, the Kurus, when they sought it in the Ghosa Jatra. The power of Suta Karna was exposed. Yudhisthira removed the power of a Suta General like Kichaka in the kingdom of King Virata. He brought under control the Kiratas and the followers of Kuvera by the force of arms of Arjuna and Bhima. The Kiratas earned their livelihood by hunting and the followers of Kuvera were the worshippers of Mammon. He used these victories to the best advantage, condemning the aggressive policy of invasion within his Empire.

The spiritual and the supernatural are dominant everywhere in the Mahabharata. As the plain description of facts can hardly interest ordinary men the Indian dramatists embellish facts with great skill to leave a lasting impression on the minds of all that vice may rise for a time but that the time for retribution is not distant and virtue will crown its followers with success in the end.

Chapter XVII.

The Comedy of Errors.

Prudence is the best safeguard; and this has been learnt from the persecutions of the bitterest enemies of mankind and not from its friends. Nations build forts, enclose cities with high walls, build warships and raise a sufficient military force to protect and defend the country from enemies. Poets are like schoolmasters in the great amphitheatre of human life—to demonstrate the value of virtue and truth, presenting side by side great incidents in the lives of great men in contrast with the vicious men of the ages and thus making an indelible impression on the minds of their pupils. Men are not created to flit away just like dreams, to fade and fall like leaves or to feast their bellies in a hand-to-mouth existence like beasts and birds. The great God has endowed human beings with something superior, the sincere pure heart to love Him whom their mortal eyes cannot see, their ears cannot hear, their hands cannot touch. If it is beauty of the body which is the all-in-all in this world, then one cannot overlook the fact that it is not everlasting in the Universe. But the beauty of art lives and the artists become immortal. The great art that baffles time's tyrannic claim, immortalises men in literature, music, sculpture and painting. God is thus reflected in His great works and workers. It is the great will and power underlying their works which can make the earnest learners realise the value of divine knowledge. The poet sings:—

> "The heavy armour vanishes to a toy,
> Short is the sorrow, endless is the joy."

Asvathama, Bhisma, Drona, Kripa, Parasurama, or devotees like Hanumana, Bibhisana and Bali, were once considered to be immortal, but they were not so until the poets Vyasa and Valmiki sang their praises. The history of success in life is demonstrated in the Mahabharata, as will appear from the first invocation verse, making obeisance to the great Goddess Saraswati, Mother of Art and Literature. Dharmaraja is the just judge and the whole world has its root in Dharma or righteousness. Homer taught what was useful in military skill and all the various uses of arms in war in order to defend the honour of a nation, and Orpheus made known to people

the noble mysteries to restrain them from bloodshed. The great heroes and heroines are held by some as allegories and by others to be demi-gods and goddesses. They were the characters who were entrusted with the work of regeneration in India. Necessarily they were not ordinary men or women. They were immaculate examples. They were represented in the epic as Gods descended from Heaven to carry on the great work on earth below. God has been manifesting Himself through the art and poetry of the ages, and the great epics prove it. Art and poetry are the best medium of a man's transformation to Godhead. The Mahabharata is styled the Great Indian Epic as it contains more examples of characters in real life, who, by their lives, attain divinity, than the sister epic, the Ramayana.

Ideal men and women naturally suffered for their own convictions. They passed their lives in no ordinary way; they did not mix freely in society but preferred to pass their lives in the forest to achieve culture and to prepare themselves for the great sacrifice in the best interests of humanity. Happiness does not lie in the enjoyment of senses in the luxuries of the royal palaces but is felt in the presence of nature and in the company of the great wise men of the day. The sublime laws of the Universe, reflected in every aspect of existence and every influence of Nature, must needs move in a circle of harmony and unity; simplicity, harmony and unity bring loveliness into the prosaic life; and the way to achieve them is through contact with nature, through sacrifices, divine meditation and absorption in Yoga practices. Mind is the real source of enjoyment and happiness and not the body, for if any one is not happy in mind no amount of physical enjoyment can make him so. The great ideals of Ancient India, as expressed in the epic's plot, changed from age to age. Birth was of no consequence without proper training and rules of conduct. The epic authors paid more respect to merit than to birth, and it was for this reason many great men, like Narada and Vasistha, were not born into the great Brahmana family. They paid less attention to the surnames of human beings which sons inherited from their parents, but more to the different Gotras and prabaras which related to a title of education and culture, to certain schools of preceptors. "Do thine own work and now know thyself" was their divine maxim. Among the lower ranks of society natural feelings are more often expressed, but in the elevated ranks of society they are sometimes completely stifled. It is only vanity and interest that

seek to speak out. It was not then the case with royalty or good society that arrogance should be deemed worthy of a crown or a cowl, or that a nymph in dishabille should be deemed an example of modesty. Virtue is the first title of nobility. Eve was not created to be seduced by Satan or to hurl Adam from Heaven to earth in the Hindu creation. No one was made for the pleasure of another. Sex relations were never a question of convenience or a discipline imposed in order to carry on the works of creation. A wife was not a slave nor a husband supreme. Life was not a matter of following the maxims that one's ancestors or lawgivers prescribed. Society never meant only those who were concerned with the Court and held high rank. By education and culture was the true conception of self-respect and society created. The general public were not infatuated by the rank and pedigree of great Kings; nor were their amusements restricted only to talking about the great military achievements of their princes. Merit before birth—for this the conqueror had to perform the Rajasuya or Horse sacrifice to fulfil his ambition.

Aristotle and Seneca held that there is no great genius without a spice of madness, and the poet Dryden sang:—

"Great wits are sure to madness near allied
And thin partitions do their bounds divide."

There is nothing more detestable than a simulated zeal, nothing more perverse than the false pretenders who pray at the pandal in view of all and who make a game of what is held sacred and holy. These are the men whom one sees with indignation trading in piety in order to purchase respect and dignity, turning up the whites of their eyes and affecting ejaculations with a heart that is all the time given up to filthy lucre. This was condemned in the sacrifice of the Asura King Bali and down to the days of King Janmejoya through the incarnations of the Dwarf God and the sage Astika; with the condemnation of Janmejoya the great epic begins. A slavish submission to truth is not commended as will appear from the story of Kausika who went to hell for speaking the truth, as is described in the Mahabharata. The result of his telling the truth to a gang of robbers who were following the fugitives meant the loss of so many lives at the hands of the robbers. Even the dispenser of justice, Pluto, was not spared for his petty, unjust and heavy punishment on the innocent sage Animandaba. "To be more wise than is right is not to be wise." Action, discipline and culture with proper initiation are responsible for the four important sections of the caste

system of Ancient Hindu society; and it is not heredity that has made all these differences.

He who knows God and his religion of love, truth, faith and duty is called a Brahman because he comes from the mouth of Brahma. The Brahmans, the Kshatriyas and the Vaisyas are called the twice-born (Dwija) as each of these is called upon to perform certain legitimate functions of society which make all happy and which inculcate high ideals of patriotism. The Brahmans are the mouthpieces of knowledge, the Kshatriyas administrators of justice and defenders of the country, the Vaisyas the thighs of society, traders and producers of wealth, and, last though not the least, the masses, the Sudras, are the feet of society on whom stands the whole important structure of Hindu society.

The great question of the difference between a military spirit and militarism became the subject matter of the invasion and the theft of the cows of King Virata by the allied force of Trigarthas and Kurus after the death of Kichaka, the powerful general of the Virata kingdom. The instinct to defend one's country and the liberty of a nation against unjust aggressors is called the military spirit. There one can see the self-respect or just right of a King or a Prince. It is true that the Kshatriyas were by caste and profession military people, but they were forbidden to act for the sake of unjust aggrandisement. This sort of militarism was an open menace to the growing intellectual culture of ancient India. The theory of "might is the only right" prevailed amongst the ambitious Kings of the Kshatriya race. Karna, a descendant of the Suta race, became not only the great general of the Kurus but minister and friend of the King Durjodhana who was trying by every means to consolidate the empire in the best way possible. The news of the death of the great Suta General Kichaka offered a golden opportunity to the Kurus and Trigarthas to make an alliance to win the Kingdom of Virata by invasion and open fight. The Trigarthas under their King Susharma attacked the Kingdom of Virata on one side and Durjodhana with his generals attacked that Kingdom on the other side; and they seized the valuable kine by thousands. The King of Virata was defeated and imprisoned by the Trigarthas. The Pandavas took advantage of this state of affairs to appear in the limelight as the saviours of the defeated Virata King. Bhima and Arjuna took up the cause of the King of Virata and fought against his enemies. Bhima released the King of Virata and

took the King of Trigarthas as a prisoner of war by his victory. Arjuna defeated the Kurus and allowed them to fly, recovering the valuable kine and taking their clothes as trophies of victory. The wicked Durjodhana, with his great generals disgraced and discomfited, fled, and the King of Trigarthas became a tributary King under the King of Virata. The dramatic description of the fight with the Kurus in the Virata Parvan is intriguing. The poet cannot avoid ministering to his craving for the marvellous and supernatural use of arms (Sammohan Astra) by Arjuna who appeared as a eunuch and as a charioteer to the Virata prince, with whom he later exchanged places. The appearance of Arjuna stupefied the Kurus and their generals and the greatness of the hero Arjuna was exemplified in that he did not take their lives or make them prisoners of war. Old Bhisma and Drona found out their mistakes and discovered that the great Vrihanalla was none but Arjuna; so they advised the tyrant Durjodhana and his friend Karna to fly for their lives immediately. The first discomfiture of the Kurus took place at the marriage of Draupadi after the burning of the lac house. The next one was the great defeat of the Kurus at the hands of the Pandavas after the successful completion of their religious vow to live in the forest, when the Kurus failed to steal the wealth of the King of Virata with all their allies and friends at their back. The Kurus came to know that the Pandavas had helped King Virata and spoilt completely the success of their plan to possess the wealth of the King of Virata.

There are peculiar times in the history of mankind when the wisest and best men of the age, with the object of regenerating society, prepare themselves by practising austerities and by carrying on works of reformation in their retreats; in proper time they emerge to perform their self-appointed task. There are certain preparations in the path of life to which they consider that they must attend before the world should know them. They deem themselves quite safe and happy in alliance with Kings like those of Virata, Trigarthas, Panchalas, Yadavas, etc. The news of this victory of the Pandavas spread like wild fire all over the countries of India, and everyone became a great admirer of them and loved them as his own ideal King and Prince. The sudden and dramatic appearance of the Pandavas and their victory were not disclosed to the King of Virata. The comedy of errors reached its climax when King Virata thought that his son was the victor of the battle of the Kurus, and not Arjuna or Vrihanala. Over this matter it is

said that the King hit Yudhisthira in the face with a piece of dice while remonstrating with him in anger; the blow drew blood. This was the dramatic battle for truth between King Virata and Yudhisthira; it had been stated that Yudhisthira lost his Empire by the stake of a dice, whereupon Yudhisthira exclaimed: "By good luck it is that the kine have been rescued and the Kurus have fled away. It is nothing strange for your son to defeat the Kurus when he has got Vrihanala with him." The blood flowed from Yudhisthira's face and Draupadi was attending him when the Prince was welcomed by his father the King as the victor of the great fight. The Prince was quite taken aback by the condition of Yudhisthira and warned his father about a great curse and evil.

The comedy of errors reached its greatest climax when, next day, King Virata found his throne occupied by Yudhisthira at the appointed hour for performing his royal duties in his court. King Virata, worked up with anger, exclaimed: "Why do you, adorned with ornaments, sit on a royal throne? What an audacious man you are for a player at dice and a visitor to this court." Whereupon Arjuna, smiling and with great derision, replied: "Oh King, know you not the son of Pandu, the Emperor Yudhisthira, whom you worshipped in his Rajasuya sacrifice? He has fulfilled his religious vow and favoured you by saving your country, wealth and people from the clutches of your enemies. The man who rescued you from the hands of your enemies, the Trigarthas, was the great Bhima; it was he who also killed Kichaka and his associates." Virata's son enlightened his father as to the manner in which Arjuna won the great fight over the Kurus with himself as charioteer. The Prince introduced good Draupadi to the King.

The eyes of the King of Virata were opened and the great comedy of errors ended in an address by the King who offered his Kingdom and friendship. The usual exchange of ceremonies was made between the King and the Pandavas; the maze of alleged disguises and perplexities was happily concluded in great rejoicings at the Court and Kingdom of Virata. The martial races of India were enlivened with the thrilling tales of the victories of the Pandavas and of their acts of generous revenge in the stillness of the forest, as, for example, their victory over the Gandharvas in rescuing Durjodhana and his family* and their generosity in allowing them to leave the field, fully disgraced and dishonoured, without killing them or pursuing

* Ghosha Jatra.

them for that purpose. These were the great incidents of life which revealed the greatness of the Pandavas and meanness of the Kurus to the world; but the wicked Kurus, in order to wipe out their disgrace and discomfiture, employed a dramatist of note to make the Pandavas appear as the state menials and courtiers of the King of Virata. If it had been really so, the Princess Uttara could not have been married to the only son of Arjuna, for Arjuna was said to have been the dancing instructor to that Princess.

The Great Indian Epic went through different stages of revision and the Virata Parvana presented to the world a real comedy of errors which was read at the funeral ceremonies of the orthodox Hindus. The funeral ceremony of a Hindu is now performed with great religious ardour for the emancipation of the soul of the departed; it is the duty of his descendants to perform his funeral rites before succeeding to the estate he has left. The funeral ceremonies of the departed Emperors of India were performed by the Emperor Yudhisthira and the Pandavas in the sacred shrines of India before he occupied the throne of the King of Virata. The mystery of the Vedanta philosophy was preached in the Virata Parvana by the followers of that philosophy, as also was the Sankhya philosophy preached in the emancipation of the sons of King Sagara by the great Bhagiratha who brought the waters of the Ganges to the sea (Vana Parvan). It demonstrates that there is nothing nobler than humanity—the soul is imprisoned in the human body until it is revealed, as Yudhisthira revealed it by religious austerities and the vow of his universal love for all creatures; foes and friends alike demonstrate the exposition of the Vedanta philosophy in holding communion with the great supreme soul of the Universe; in this lies the true emancipation of the soul and not in lifting the mystery after the death of human beings.

The greatness of the Mahabharata lay in the display of facts, in the power of putting proper things in such a manner as would appeal to the general public and so beautifully as to arouse the dormant faculties of the human imagination to a realisation of the true spirit of the great religion of Divine Love. The great heroes like Bhima, Arjuna, Nakul and Sahadeva were the great pioneers of a reformed India—along with such wives as Rukmini, Draupadi, Subhadra and Uttara. Their great personalities, splendid examples of forbearance, love, wisdom, tact, skill and pluck, all are representative of a great epoch of real religious and spiritual reform and of the deliverance of the ancient Aryan race from the thraldom of materialistic overlordism in India.

One cannot miss the significance of the ages when the great epic was first conceived and afterwards revised. It is mentioned in the epic that the merit attained by the one practice of truthfulness and virtue is equal to the acquisition of merit by the performances of a hundred sacrifices or by having hundred sons*. There was a time when hundred sons were signs of great virtue; Pluto (Yama) granted the boon of hundred sons to the famous chaste Princess Sabitri, but at the time of the Mahabharata one hundred sons under the boon of Siva proved to be a veritable curse. The great minister of Chandra Gupta in his book of lessons mentioned that it is better to have one qualified son than to have a hundred foolish sons.

There was one God. The Vedanta philosophy made it with the union of Parmatma and Jibatma with two kinds of Poroksha and Aporoksha knowledge. Wisdom, Veda and God was once an abstract unit, but it split up into two, three, four, five and so on. The number plays an important part in assessing the age of anything. In the Mahabharata one can follow the several stages of development through it. The idea of the trinity Brahma, Vishnu and Siva evolved into four forms of God Vedas, and eventually the worship of five different Gods came into existence. The figure "five" then became prominent in everything, *viz.*, five ways or rules of success in Yoga philosophy, five elements of the Vedanta philosophy, five fires, corns, nectars, parents, husbands, sons, gems, cardinal virtues, qualities of matter and senses. The great Cupid was invested with the five weapons of his success in the material world. Siva, the great God with the wonderful three eyes, an abnormal creation, could not withstand the force of the weapons of Cupid and fell a victim to passion. The result was that Siva killed Cupid by the fire of his eyes and the force of the religious fervour he acquired, and he became the God of Destruction. Siva was known by the name of "five faces" (Panchanana). An arrow of five points came into evidence, and the five sacrifices of a householder became important. Yogi Siva became a householder for the birth of Kartick who was to kill the great Asura, Taraka. With the birth of Kartick the question of child-welfare became the subject matter of civilisation and the Goddess Sasthi came into prominence. The number six next became prominent—the six systems of philosophies, saviours and enemies of mankind. Then came the number seven; the great sages were seven, seven days in a week, seven islands, colours, oceans, and notations of music. Then

* Adi Parvan, Chap. 74, Verse 102.

came eight; the eight regents of the eight quarters of the Universe, *viz.*, Indra, Agni, Yama, Nairuta, Varuna, Maruta, Kuvera, Isana. The worship of earthy Siva is being carried on even now in these eight quarters of the Universe. The great grammarian made his work of eight chapters. The eight Vasus formed the subject matter of the Mahabharata. Then came the number nine; the highest number in the digit is nine even now; the planets, gems, chief outlets of the human body and nine labourers of Hindu Society, the Nabasayaka community, who were the middle class between the Dwija and Sudra community. There were nine sentiments in poetry and latterly it became ten with the addition of parental love. Thus the progress of civilisation at the time of the great epic's conception was marked by the number eighteen which is the number of its divisions. The Puranas of the Hindus were eighteen.

Prakriti is attracted to Purusha and Purusha to Prakriti. Sri Krishna was the Divine Love, incarnate in human form. God is love and love is God. The greatness of God is found in universal love and not in the bestial carnal love which is profane. The great God forbade it as it was selfish. Sri Krishna was the ideal God of the Universe, the father of the Hindu Cupid. He proved to the world that he was not a God of the material world like Siva, who destroyed Cupid. He gave his son Cupid ample field for action. Many thousands of beautiful girls like Uma could not resist Him. He thus belied the Sankhya system of philosophy and proved the truth of the Vedanta philosophy by Rash-lila.

" Imperial Cæsar dead and turned to clay
May stop a hole to keep the wind away."

What did the great conquerors achieve by their ambition and aggrandisement? Nothing that the true love of God cannot achieve. The visions of human beings who hold fast to the true religion of Divine Love can excel the ambitious achievements of the great conquerors. False love of wealth and power and covetousness are the roots of all mischief. The human heart throbs uneasily in carnal love, with Nature's waves of creative passion. Only true love is enduring.

Why should God make everything so beautiful only to let it end in destruction? This view of God's purpose on earth is the product of Maya or illusion which conceals true knowledge of God; this is *the* great comedy of errors. The realisation of Divine Love reveals God's true purpose and clears away the errors and defects of human vision and understanding.

Chapter XVIII.

Marriage Union.

The Mahabharata has more historical probability in its narratives and is more in unison with probable human character than the Ramayana. Yudhisthira was installed on the throne of the Virata King. The savage tribes in the forest and everywhere in the Empire were brought under control and civilised. The Pandavas had talents and accomplishments which were turned to the best advantage. The wildness of the savage aborigines was replaced by the pursuit of honest professions and of all sorts of outdoor sports and games. Each tribe settled down; established in certain places, they chose and carried on a trade or profession; and they earned their livelihood by these means instead of by depredations. They saw a better mode of life in the domestic life, in manufacturing many useful articles from earthenware and metal. The peaceful countrymen or sages were no longer afraid of these savage brutes of whom Baka and Hidimba had been specimens. They did not bear the grievous burden of maintaining them with food and drink. The general public became great admirers of the Pandavas and loved them as their own. They feasted and rioted for many days after the great victory and the deliverence of the country and nation from the wicked invasion. The King of Virata, out of his great debt of gratitude, offered to marry his daughter, Uttara, to a suitable bridegroom from the family of the Pandavas—upon whomsoever they should decide.

What Draupadi's marriage with Yudhisthira after the great Svayamvara ceremony was, so was Uttara's marriage with Abhimanyu. Both were equally important. It could not be gainsaid that Satyaki, as the mouthpiece of the Yadavas in their meeting with the Pandavas at the shrine of Pravasa, spoke of their wish to install Abhimanyu on the throne of Yudhisthira till the religious vow would be over. Yudhisthira and Sri Krishna did not approve of it.

The disguised Pandavas were discovered and gave ample proofs of their greatness and valour in that epoch-making age of reform.

Vasistha officiated as the priest and matchmaker of King Sambarana to recover his lost Kingdom from the Panchalas, and Dhaumya did so, at the instance of Vyasa, in the marriage of Draupadi. It is not mentioned who officiated in the marriage of Abhimanyu. The Pandavas were given the credit as being incarnations of the Gods Virtue, Maruta, Indra and the Asvini Kumars and Draupadi of Sachi, Queen of Indra, and Abhimanyu of Varcha, son of the Moon (Soma).* Likewise Sidhi and Dhriti were reincarnated in the mothers of the Pandavas, Kunti and Madri.† Durjodhana represented a portion of Kali and his brothers were the sons of Pulastya.‡ It will be seen that the marriage of King Sambarana took place with Tapiti, the daughter of the Sun. The great King Sambarana was their son and heir to the throne and he represented the two dynasties of Indian Kings, solar and lunar. Kurukshettra was founded by the same King and the King of Gods, Indra, gave him the boon that those who died in that place would go to Heaven. Visvamitra, the royal sage, effected the marriage alliance between the great Rama Chandra and his brothers with the daughters of Janaka, King of Mithila and a famous and wise royal sage. The Kurus and the Pandavas were separated, though descended from the same family, by their following of different lines of action and policy. The descendants of Yadu, though disinherited from their paternal estate, restored and rebuilt their fortunes and reigned over kingdoms of their own which they made and acquired by their valour. The mother of the Pandavas, Kunti, and the wife of Arjuna descended from the line of Yadu. In those days of chivalry the crown was not the gift of the parents but largely depended upon the accomplishments of the Prince who would be fit to wear it.• In the early days of civilisation it was in the hands of the wise sages, as when Prithu was crowned. Yudhisthira was crowned as the Emperor of India by the advice of Sri Krishna and in the actual ceremony of annointing him Sri Krishna had to take arms to remove the obstacle in his path. The marriage of Uttara with Abhimanyu seemed to have been an event of great importance, as it was in the nature of declaring Abhimanyu the Crown Prince of India to whom the succession of inheritance would go. Invitations to the marriage were sent by Yudhisthira and the King of Virata to all their friends and relatives and to Vasudeva Sri Krishna. The wives of

* Adi Parvana, Chap. LXVII, Verses 111 to 116, 157.

† Ibid Verse 161.

‡ Ibid Verse 85.

the Pandavas with their mother repaired to Virata with great joy after the long separation. The glory of the feats of arms of the Pandavas was resounded by the messengers bearing invitations to the Kings all over the country. The Kurus and their friends were disgraced and could not respond to the invitation. The whole country of Virata was in a state of feverish excitement over the happy marriage. The great admirers of the Pandavas mustered in strong force to witness the ceremony. All the invited guests reviled the Kurus and their adherents loudly and publicly which had the magic effect of telling upon the imagination and inclination of the general public at large.

The Kings of Benares, Saivya, Panchala, Vrisni, Andhaka, Bhoja and others came and prominent amongst them were Sri Krishna, Balarama, Krita-Varman, Satyaki, Hridika, Akrura, Samba, with their queens and guarded by their great armies. The bridegroom Abhimanyu with his mother Subhadra were received with great ceremonies. The families of these Kings were provided with suitable palaces in the capital. They presented the bridegroom and bride with rich and lavish presents, worthy of their rank and position. The great sages who graced the occasion with their presence showered blessings and the Sutas recited the stories of Vasistha and Arundhati, Agastya and Lopamudra, Satyabana and Sabitri, Sibi and Harish Chandra, Rama and Sita, Nala and Damayanti and enlivened the assembly with the true ideas of chastity.

The Kings were amusing themselves with the story of the Svayamvara marriage of Durjodhana's daughter, Lakshmana. how Samba was imprisoned for his attempt to carry her away by force of arms and was released by Balarama when that famous avatar threatened to destroy the Kingdom of the Kurus. This Samba was said to have been ill of leprosy and was cured by the worship of the Sun.* Abhimanyu was not a legendary hero who became one of the principal actors in the theatre of the great war of Kurukshettra where he was said to have destroyed one-fourth of the army of the Kurus within half a day and was unjustly killed when seven generals surrounded him without giving him arms or opportunity to fight against them in fair combat. The wicked Kurus thought that the war would be decided in their favour by the killing of

* In Orissa Konaraka 24 miles north-west of Puri a temple of the Sun was said to have been established by Prince Samba and in the Purana an ode to the Sun begins with his name. King Kalinga was the maternal grandfather of Lakshmana and it could be possible that when Samba went to his grandfather-in-law's place he was cured of it and established the temple. However the adjective lunatic proves the great influence of the Sun and Moon on the human race.

Abhimanyu, as it would make the greatest Pandava warrior, Arjuna, die of grief for his son. This proved to be their great mistake as, on the other hand, it spurred Arjuna to greater action and to revenge for the unjust death of his beloved son. The Mahabharata was originally meant to assuage the grief of the bereaved Kings, as will be found in the table of contents.* The Bhagabata Gita which was not then preached by Sri Krishna, was a distinct composition, not in line with the great epic's conception. It cannot be overlooked that the creators of the heroes and the heroines who were of very great eminence in the material, moral, political and spiritual sphere of action became the centre of all attraction in the great epic.

The five great heroes, the Pandava brothers, representing as they did the five cardinal points of virtue, were the great pioneers of ancient civilisation in India under the guidance of Sri Krishna and of great sages like Vyasa, Lomasha, Sounaka, Markandeya and, last though not the least, Narada. Their skill, acquired by constant practice in the use of all sorts of weapons during their forest life, stood them in good stead in actual warfare. The just indignation of the people and the virtuous Kings was aroused by the inhuman conduct of the Kurus. The Aryan race as a whole was very sentimental and religious. The marriage ceremony of Prince Abhimanyu and Princess Uttara was performed with due religious rites and with great pomp; and was followed by many amusements. Liberality is the best refuge of virtue and good behaviour that of happiness, and nothing was wanting in these respects on either side—from the guests or the hosts. The nuptial dowries given by the parties were worthy of their great wealth, position and rank.

After the great marriage ceremony was over all the invited Kings of India assembled in the beautiful Court of Virata before departing for their respective capitals. Naturally the principal topic was the steps to be taken to set right the great wrong done by the Kurus. The revered old Kings like Drupada and Vasudeva, father of Sri Krishna and Balarama, were conspicuous and took part in the debate. In that debate Balarama was for not fighting on any account, if peace could be made. Sri Krishna was for sending a messenger to find out the real intentions of Durjodhana and to find someone who would be able to induce Durjodhana to surrender half of the Kingdom of Yudhisthira. Satyaki found fault with

* Adi Parvana, Chap. I, Verses 227-229.

Balarama's attitude. It was only proper and fit that the Kurus must redeem the pledge they made and for which the good Yudhisthira fulfilled the religious vow he had undertaken. If they did not do so, war should be declared against them. The old King Drupada clearly said that it would be mere waste of time. The foolish Durjodhana would not return the Kingdom and old Dhritarastra was a tool in the hands of his beloved and wicked son. Let his priest be sent to the Court of the Kurus to demand formally the return of the Kingdom of Yudhisthira. This was finally approved of by all there.

The invited guests after this decision left for their destinations, duly honoured and treated, with the necessary formalities and ceremonies of friendship, exchanges of sincere love, affection and due regard, according to the relationship of the guests and hosts.

Durjodhana was not idle; he was trying by all means to become more powerful than the Pandavas and give a fitting reply to his defeat in his sad attempt to acquire the kine of the King of Virata. He knew that he must have wealth to prosecute his aim and to achieve final success in the battle-field. He was not the man to surrender anything that he had acquired by foul or fair means. He was therefore held to be an incarnation of the Dark Age Kali. The marriage of Abhimanyu with the Princess Uttara was to Durjodhana as a bolt from the blue. The wise priest of Drupada, as the messenger of Yudhisthira, went to demand the Kingdom from Durjodhana. This added insult to injury to the Kurus. The old blood feud between the Kurus and the Panchalas dated back from the days of the King Sambarana, and it was the Pandavas who broke it and made an alliance by marriage with the Panchala Princess, Draupadi, without the consent of the Kuru King Dhritarastra and the great elders like Bhisma, Kripa, Drona, etc. Immediately after the disgraceful defeat of the Kurus in their unsuccessful attempt at cowlifting the Virata Princess Uttara was married to the son of Arjuna, Abhimanyu. This was too much for the Kurus to bear patiently. They were making preparations for war. Neither were the Pandavas then idle. They sent their messengers to all the Kings of India to take up their cause in the event of a war being declared.

The Kuru Court represented the rule of a Prince with the aid of a few self-opinionated braggarts who wanted Kingdoms and fame as great warriors and diplomats; their aim was to establish an Empire under this worst and most infamous of cliques. Durjodhana intended that the material, moral and

spiritual progress of the whole of India should be deferred to suit his own ambition of calling himself the Emperor of India. His ambitions and his administration were based on naked militarism. He looked upon human beings as so many toys to be worked up into armies and weapons of destruction for his sport, ambition and joy. Naturally his aim and object had been throughout to create armies and secure generals and allies by all means possible. He now wanted to put to the test his great army and his allies. He did not dread war so much as Yudhisthira did, for the latter knew what it meant. It was not a plaything to Yudhisthira. Durjodhana and Karna were great swashbucklers who always courted attacks and fights throughout their lives. They had no respect for their own real welfare or that of a nation. They cared very little for good conduct and faith. The great tyrants of the age were the Kings of India who raised mercenary soldiers and destroyed the works of the Pandavas. Ethics, politics and religion, so far as they deprecate fighting and plead for peace, were discussed in the open Court of the Kurus and privately. All methods were justified in the cause of Kuru culture—duplicity, violence, incitements and treachery. All means were adopted to win the ultimate victory on the conservative line of action that "Might is right." The only way of becoming an Emperor of India was to have such an overwhelming military force and such a number of well-known commanders as would dismiss all thought of resistance. The culture of the Kurus did not mean the best development of all scientific and artistic enlightenment of the age, but merely an all-absorbing ambition to be on the top of all Kings and their countries, just to crush those who would oppose their party.

The Pandavas and Sri Krishna organised their party on the liberal idea of ruling the country according to humanity, justice, truth, religion and love. They were the ideal spiritual and ethical types of men who stood against all forms of materialism, whether in thought or life. They, by their examples, proved to the world that human beings were not meant for luxury, the enjoyment of wealth or passion, but were the possessors of eternal peace and contentment, striving in single-minded devotion for the emancipation of their souls. They were not slaves of any formulæ or of the political or ethical labels of a blind ruler like Dhritarastra or of a philosopher like Charvaka or of ministers like Kanika, Sakuni or Karna. The Pandavas and Sri Krishna were patiently working for the reconstruction of a Greater India and a happier lot for humanity

at large, and therefore they were called the liberals. They were preparing for a war to make war in the future impossible. They, by the sincere proofs of their great merits, obtained a good following in their lifetime and waged war against overwhelming numbers.

Marriages in ancient India were not altogether a social event but were more or less effected on political grounds. Durjodhana married his daughter Lakshmana to Sri Krishna's son, Samba, long before the marriage of Abhimanyu with Uttara—the Princess of Virata. When Durjodhana heard of the prominent parts Sri Krishna and Balarama and other Yadavas had taken in that ceremony he was to a great extent alarmed. The drama reached its climax when Durjodhana, the great follower of Charvaka, went to Sri Krishna at Dwarka, immediately after Sri Krishna had returned from Abhimanyu's marriage festival. Arjuna was sent there by Yudhisthira for the same purpose as Durjodhana had gone. Sri Krishna was sleeping in his room, like Narayana, unconcerned, when Durjodhana came first and took his seat near the head of Sri Krishna and Arjuna stood with clasped hands at the feet of Sri Krishna. Sri Krishna, when aroused, saw Arjuna first and then Durjodhana; after the due ceremonies of welcome he enquired of each the object of his visit. Durjodhana pressed his cause, asking for help from Sri Krishna in the event of a battle between the Kurus and the Pandavas. He did not forget to put forward his claim on the ground of the old custom of aiding the man who had come first for the purpose. Sri Krishna was not found wanting in pleasing both the parties like an impartial God. He told Durjodhana that he was convinced that he was the first comer but Durjodhana would admit that he was not seen first and the golden maxim had been that the younger of the two persons who had come for help should be given the first preference in choosing the help that would be offered to both of them. The two kinds of help Sri Krishna placed before them were as follows:—firstly, he would not fight with any arms in the future war but would only give his advice; and secondly, his invincible great army of skilled soldiers called the Narayanas would be given to fight in the war. Arjuna chose Sri Krishna and Durjodhana was very pleased with the help of an army of very great strength. Durjodhana went to Balarama for help, who promised to be neutral but advised him to observe all the rules of honour which the Kshatriyas had been following. Krita-Varman was also approached and Durjodhana got his army.

It is quite evident from the marriage ceremony of Abhimanyu and what had happened thereafter that the marriage was an important event of history which to a certain extent sowed the seeds of battle. Sri Krishna was justly deified as the Almighty God, when he neither objected to marrying his son to the daughter of Durjodhana nor to sacrificing his great soldiers, the Narayanas, who were to fight against the side that he favoured. It might have been more a joke than an actual fact; but it served the usefulness of drama and fiction. The true God does not fight with his arms; it is the knowledge of virtue and truth and faith which invests the victor with the strength to win his just cause.

The messengers of Kings who want help in wars must reach the ears of authorities who can safely be approached by the tongue of wisdom. This was the great lesson which was taught by Sri Krishna in his alternative proposal; and the progress of civilisation hitherto retarded was set free. It was said that the great sage Gautama recovered his eyesight through the grace of Sri Krishna. Sri Krishna wanted to place Durjodhana under a very great obligation by supplying him with the invincible army so that his word would at least be respected.

God is not the author of good or evil. He has no fear or freewill like human beings. It is said in the Rig Veda* that " you will not find God who has created the Universe, for something divides you and Him enveloped in mist." The Vedanta philosophy deals with God and Maya. The illustrious sovereigns Pururava and Yajati left a great legacy to their descendants in the Aila Gita and Yajati Gatha where they stressed that a King must let his mind rule his senses, instead of being ruled by them. The good Pandavas were their worthy descendants who distinguished themselves as great exponents of self-control, whereas the Kurus were ignorant of it. Ignorance is Maya.

" Lead us not into Temptation but deliver us from Evil " is the great saying in the Scripture which was the keynote of the great epic, "Paradise Lost." The son of Sri Krishna, Samba, who was Durjodhana's son-in-law, was the cause of the destruction of the Yadavas. Fear rules the mind of an evil spirit like Durjodhana and, because of fear, Durjodhana approached Sri Krishna and asked for an army of great soldiers—to work out his own destruction. Living religion does not grow by doctrines only but by the narratives of the glorious past. He

* X. 82. 7.

who honours religion finds Providence in the history of a nation. The ideal man and woman do not rise to the highest position unless they abase themselves first and then rise afterwards.

The marriage of Abhimanyu, like that of Draupadi, and the great rejoicings at the victory over the Kurus and the Trigarthas prevented the Kurus from agreeing to an honourable peace with the Pandavas by redeeming the pledge they had made and for which Yudhisthira and his brothers accepted the religious vow of thirteen years. The Pandavas were not the foolish dreamers of the past, and fear of future betrayal led them to pass a period of their lives in menial services in the Kingdom of Virata, as has been falsely depicted by the rhapsodists to please the ignorant audience; these falsehoods later found place in the current version of the epic. There is no proper description of the marriage of the great Princess Uttara who was the heroine of the war panegyric. Uttara was the faithful reflex of Maya and from her womb the dead child Parikshit was brought to life by Sri Krishna; this great resurrection of the glorious Parikshit who dispelled the effects of the Dark Age, Kali, by the preaching of Divine Love, was the subject matter of the Srimad Bhagavata which came from the mouth of Suka, the illustrious son of Vyasa, the great author of the Mahabharata, to neutralise the effects of the unjust curse of the angry son of a sage. His son, Janmejoya, undertook the snake sacrifice just to avenge his father's death, but he was obliged to give it up at the instance of a sage named Astika (or " a believer in God "). Parasara, the father of the illustrious Vyasa, began the Rakshasa sacrifice to avenge the death of his father Sakti, son of Vasistha, but was forced to abandon it at the instance of the great sages of the day. The pious King Parikshit proved to the world that to die is to live again —there is no death in fact to one who has realised the Divine Love of God Almighty. The true lover knows not what he has lost. Destruction is the law of Nature and work of Maya or ignorance. That the great God should not be prayed to for the destruction of one's enemies is the essence of the true Hindu religion. He who does so effects his own destruction. This is the work of Maya or illusion which was graphically shown in the fight, before the marriage of Abhimanyu to Uttara, by the use of the Sammohun weapon by Arjuna. The great Asuras and Rakshasas, proud of the boons of Brahma, were all killed either by Vishnu or His Sakti, the Goddess Durga. They were both worshipped in the Virata Parvana.

The Srimadbhagavata-Gita and the Chandi are the works on the subjects of their worship.

It cannot be overlooked that the Kingdom of Virata was identified with the first incarnation of Vishnu. It was Arjuna who met Durjodhana at Dwarka, when Sri Krishna was sleeping like Narayana after the deluge. The wicked Durjodhana was elated with the gain of the great military force of Sri Krishna; and Arjuna, with due meekness and true knowledge of Divine power, sought the assistance of the brain power of the great God, as he knew very well that as a God he could not take any side of the great conflict. He was always ready to prick the human conscience, if it was not callous, blurred or dead.

Arjuna invited Sri Krishna to come to their place to help them with good counsels, as occasion would demand. Arjuna might have received the confidences of Sri Krishna before the war and removed the great doubts of Yudhisthira, as he did in the Bhisma Parvan* in referring to Sri Krishna's words, spoken in the Bhagabata Gita :—" Victory is certainly there where Krishna is." Arjuna said :—" I do not find any cause for sorrow : you have the Lord of the Universe and the Lord of the Celestials wishing victory to you."

* Bhisma Parvana, Chap. XXI, Verses 14-17.

CHAPTER XIX.

Mission of Peace and Reconciliation.

Sri Krishna's visit to the Kuru Court with the object of effecting a reconciliation between the Kurus and the Pandavas in order to secure lasting peace and the regeneration of the Kshatriya race is an important event in the great epic. Sri Krishna was neither a King nor a prophet, but he bore peace and goodwill towards all. In the council of Kings who assembled at Abhimanyu's marriage; he preached in support of lasting peace and with that object he undertook the great mission to the Kuru Court. He was far from sure of meeting with success, but as a friend of the two families and a real well-wisher of the country and in order to ward off a general massacre, he felt it his bounden duty to make a sincere strenuous attempt to establish peace; he never appeared there as a God.* He had no bias and would do what was good for both parties.† No one else but Sri Krishna could have been thought worthy of performing the great task.

The exquisite delineation of human sentiments, the chivalry of the age with the claims of justice and fair play, was a feature of the epic; the past actions and events in the lives of the contending parties were placed side by side with the interesting details of the contrasts in all the principal characters of the great epic. It represented briefly the political and religious history of Ancient India, as it developed with regeneration and reform throughout the ages. The art of fighting, in which the Asuras excelled, had never been the handiwork of God. The great weapon Vajra was made by the King of Gods from the bone of Dadhichi, a Brahmin sage. The great sage Bhrigu was the priest of the Asuras who drove the Gods from heaven and cursed his son-in-law, Vishnu, to be born as ten Avataras on earth. Parasurama, a descendant of Bhrigu, was one of these Avataras and was identified with the general massacre of the Kshatriyas, not even sparing his own mother when his father asked him to take off her head. It was Rama Chandra who

* Udyoga Parvana, Chap. LXXII.
† Ibid Chap. LXXIX.

punished Parasurama, when he came to fight with him after the breaking of the great bow of Siva. Kasyapa, the priest of the Kshatriyas, exiled Parasurama to Surat and revived the Kshatriya race*. Parasurama was a mere destroyer and his axe was fixed upon his hand, till he became religious and expiated his great sin by bathing in the sacred river Brahmaputra. Balarama was another avatar of the age in which Sri Krishna and the Pandavas flourished. Balarama and Sri Krishna killed King Kamsa and rescued their parents from prison. King Kamsa was killed when he tried to kill Balarama and Sri Krishna. Sri Krishna rescued the son of Sandipana, a sage who was his preceptor, from the hands of an Asura. He was instrumental in saving the lives of Indian Princes and Kings from the prison of Jarasandha who would have executed them if he had not been killed. The Indians are a very sentimental race and they pay more respect to a successful man and a saviour of the age like Sri Krishna than to a great monarch, an Avatar or a conqueror of the age.

Yudhisthira bade Sri Krishna *adieu* in a few words, giving him authority to do anything he thought best in executing his great mission. "You are well aware of what is conducive to the good of both parties; you are at full liberty to do what you think best to secure a lasting peace between the two families. May you come back soon with the happy news of peace, in good health and prosperity."

Sri Krishna replied: "Brother! you must bear in mind that a lifelong practice of self-control and a policy of humility are not the qualities which should adorn an Emperor of India, specially a Kshatriya of Kshatriyas. Be ready with all preparations for war, as I have anticipated it since Durjodhana tried to steal your Empire by a deceitful game of dice with the consent of his elders and has not been ashamed to enjoy it all these years with their families and friends. They were then very eager to destroy you by a conclusive fight; they are now burning with their defeat and disgrace at the hands of Arjuna. They tried their very best to bring me to their side but could not succeed†. I shall not spare them in exposing their vices and contrasting them with your virtues in the open Kuru Court before all. I have not forgotten the wickedness and vile treachery they practised upon you through the blind King, fruitful father of a

* Shanti Parvana, Chap. XLIX.

† Udyoga Parvana, Chap. LXXIX, Verse 14.

hundred sinful sons. The instructions of the virtuous King will have my best attention. Rest assured that whatever is capable of being accomplished by speech or deed will not be left undone by me. Farewell! "

Sri Krishna looked round and found Draupadi weeping bitterly. He cried out:—" O good Draupadi! Do not weep, know it for certain that if they disregard my good advice, then their bodies shall sweep the earth and you, with your husband Yudhisthira, will rule over the Empire that they unjustly took."

Sri Krishna, fully equipped with jewels, arms and armour and taking Satyaki and picked followers, set out on the journey with all due formalities on an auspicious day in the month of October (Kartick). The silent tears of Draupadi were more powerful than the instructions of Yudhisthira and his brothers.

Sri Krishna had played an important part in stopping the fight on the day of Draupadi's marriage when he declared that Draupadi was lawfully won. It was he who installed Yudhisthira on the throne of the Empire and was given the place of honour after removing the objector, Sisupala. Now he was going to the Kuru Court to make peace or declare war against the infidels and persecutors of the good and the just. Sri Krishna built India with one race, one religion, one Emperor and it was the party which stood for this aim of a United India whose cause he was to plead. He went there with the good motive of reforming the wicked party of the Kurus, whose main care was only that they should rule, by placing before them the virtuous deeds of the great characters whom they were persecuting without any just cause or grievance whatsoever. He knew all the strategems of a plenipotentiary. He was eager and ardent, with a heart bent on the practical success of life. He knew how to put into practice the great religion of love. It was he who penetrated the hearts of men and women with the religion of Divine Love which stirred the soul into action. Every sentiment was explained and every feeling seemed the forerunner of still greater joys. The genius of this emancipator released men and women from the chains and thraldom of society rules, laws and sacred canons.

The whole race of humanity—men, women and children, young and old—had legitimate demands on him. He introduced an accumulation of new comforts in life, dependent on the virtues of heart and soul, strangely different from the affection for costly pleasures of the senses. His reputation for sense and honour, combined with his personal popularity, had given him

great influence in the social, political and religious circles of Ancient India. The state of the world then did not depend on the well-known adage "Listen and follow my precept, not example."

Durjodhana and his famous uncle Sakuni went personally to receive him. The reception was a great State function with music, blowing of conches and a grand military display of arms and armour, chariots, elephants and horses, with the full army equipages of the Vrishni and Kuru Courts. Dhritarastra rose from his seat as soon as Sri Krishna's advent was announced. A great commotion arose and all stood up to receive him with due deference. A seat of honour was provided for Sri Krishna. Satyaki and Krita-Varman were also given seats of honour. As soon as the seats were occupied absolute silence prevailed. The great Kuru Court was famous for many things in the past; even now the extreme orderliness of the manner in which the hall filled was good. A student of human nature would at once have declared that the dominant attitude of the audience was one of seriousness. They were there for a deeper purpose than mere curiosity. But a general state of curiosity was apparent in the impatience to catch a glimpse of the great man of the age, Sri Krishna. Thousands of people thronged the streets for that purpose.

After the usual formalities of a Court function of this kind were over, Sri Krishna addressed the great Assembly with a loud clear voice so that the whole body of men could clearly hear and understand what he was speaking:—

"Let there be peace! My mission, of great importance, is to preach it and establish it between the Kurus and the Pandavas, as they both belong to the noble family of the great rulers of the earth, famous for their greatness of head, heart and piety. This dynasty of Kings was the best amongst Kshatriya Kings of India; nobody could challenge it. O good Dhritarastra! Let there be peace! You set right your sons and I shall do what is necessary so far as the Pandavas are concerned. United you stand, divided you fall. Do not forget it. You must remember this, O Citizens by birth of a common country! You have a right to concentrate your affections upon yourselves only. You have the same religion, manners, and customs. But if every country were to stand by her own King and people and every country and people fight against the other for self-aggrandisement, then the entire population in all countries would be ruined and destroyed. If they are on the other hand all united and

adopt the most commendable motives of carefully guarding and preserving the union of the whole country on a sound basis of good religion and equitable principles of justice and wisdom, then a really splendid edifice of Greater India, of real independence, which would be the mainstay of peace, liberty and goodwill amongst all, would be built to ensure peace at home and abroad, with the consequent prosperity of the nation all over India. This is the only way to make permanent your family felicity and the peace of all India."

"The rivalries within your family produced disastrous results, and intrigues in the past only embittered your mutual feelings. You must realise the inestimable benefits to be derived from the union for which I plead. There will be no ill-feelings between you all—there will be no wars between yourselves and neighbouring countries and, what is more, you will avoid the necessity of these overgrown military establishments which, under any form of government, would be disastrous to the liberty, peace and order of the whole country of India. The love of the one endears to you the maintenance and support of the other. Designing men might endeavour to encourage a belief that there was some sort of real difference in local interests and views. This action is no other than criminal. It tends to alienate each man from the other, whereas everyone ought to be bound together by fraternal affection. You must remember that union rests on the patriotic desire of a proper organisation for the whole of India. You have practical experience of a single Government within an Empire which the good Yudhisthira gave you when he was in power and before he handed over to you so that you could have a practical demonstration of the alternative system. You have thus learnt practical lessons from actual experience—you were lately rescued from the hands of the Gandharvas and from the force of the Matsya kingdom by the Pandavas. For the permanency of your present happy state it is of the utmost importance that you should abandon all sorts of mischievous pretexts and oppositions and should fulfil the definite promise you made to return the Empire of Yudhisthira after thirteen years. The spirit of revenge, natural upon the unfulfilment of the definite pledge you gave, would follow and with it war, in itself a frightful despotism. I came to warn you in the most solemn manner against the baneful effects of this. It is only natural—I must admit—having its root in the strongest passions of the human mind. The nation or clan which indulges in a sort of habitual hatred towards another without

any rhyme or reason, must be slavish in its habits and not a collection of independent human beings. Never forget this, but always remember it."

When these broad principles of politics failed to have the desired effect on the Kurus then he stressed his points as follows:—

"I repeat it—let your promise be fulfilled. Honesty is always the best policy. Real patriots who fail to resist the intrigues of the favourite are liable to become suspected and odious. I offer to you the counsel of a true friend and relation of the family in the best interests of all concerned. All infractions of love and all inequity in our social relations should be speedily punished. All the old abuses should be avenged. Nobody believes what is unpleasant to himself. You will not believe me now for you think me to be foolish and yourselves to be all-wise. You obtained power in one direction but you have lost it in another so far as your senses are concerned. You look now at me as pitilessly as snakes, as savagely as bears; Nature never meant you to be so. I did everything that I could for the country and the people who would be ruined, but you cared very little for them. I love them as well as you, and for that reason I have come to plead for the universal good. Kingship was meant to secure an increase in authority in order to remedy the many wrongs of society. A King mastered strength and wealth, not for himself, but for the good of the country and people he ruled. He was not meant to further his own ends or those of his heirs. The world will judge you by your decision. You must remember this; and do not in future urge a claim upon me to which I cannot respond. I did not come to upset a throne and start a revolution in the country. Do not give opportunity to the world to declare openly that the wicked children of a blind King robbed the good Yudhisthira of his Empire by deceitful means. I came here to save your lives and consolidate the throne on which the old family of Kuru Kings ruled wisely and became famous. Do not, for God's sake, drag men to death, which a war amongst you will mean. You must realise that in your decision the lives of millions are at stake. Do not abuse the power of the people and the country, placed in your hands, for your selfish ends. Think of true love, and not cruel jealousy! Love makes the bitterest things sweet. I come to establish love and friendship between the Kurus and the Pandavas; that is the mission for which I am here. When you accept it, then, and only then, will I accept your hospitality

and the professions of friendship which you displayed in my welcome here. Prove by your action that you are all sincere, good men. All these displays of wealth and power which you have shown to me may excite in the minds of simpletons great joy and admiration, but my heart is disturbed with the future fate which awaits you on account of your villainy in the past. Avert the cruel fate of the whole family of the Kurus and their friends, which will surely fall upon you if war is actually waged. Know for certain that all your accumulation of strength, wealth and energies will prove futile in actual fight with the Pandavas."

The Kurus took time for their decision and requested Sri Krishna to accept their hospitality which he, wise man, flatly refused. Durjodhana pressed him very hard through his daughter but he retorted with their past conduct towards the good Pandavas and Draupadi which precluded him from accepting the same. Sri Krishna became the guest of the wise Vidura with whom his aunt, Kunti, was then living. Sri Krishna informed her all about the Pandavas; and Kunti was very much pleased to see Sri Krishna there as a guest. The Kurus were very much humiliated by this, especially as Durjodhana was the brother-in-law of Sri Krishna. Sri Krishna proved to the world that the house of his son's father-in-law was not so welcome as that of his beloved pious Vidura. The Kuru household was very much disturbed at Sri Krishna's bold open attack in his utterance at the Kuru Court. Dhritarastra, Queen Gandhari and Vidura admonished Durjodhana to do what was right, but in vain. Durjodhana would not submit to what Sri Krishna pressed nor would he agree to do what his parents insisted on. The wise Vidura was outspoken and told Durjodhana clearly that he was not so much concerned with his fate as with that of his poor old parents. The old mother and father could not restrain him. Gandhari cried out :—" O my child! it is not God who is hard on you—it is yourself who, under the influence of others, wish to be downtrodden and ruined. What a shame! your avarice will bring upon you Heaven's rage and you all will float in rivers of blood and tears. Think of the fate which will befall your poor parents who brought you forth and that of the family and children whom you brought up and love!" She waited for a moment, but no reply came. At last Durjodhana said :—" There is no likelihood of peace on the terms which Sri Krishna proposed; I cannot part with the Empire which I earned justly Be not afraid of Sri Krishna's words. He is a

friend of the Pandavas and our sworn enemy. I shall meet all his points and make him look small in our Court." He did what he said and his reply was full of vanity and false arguments. He was seldom disturbed by opposing influences. He began with an air of superiority and boldness which rather irritated the audience than convinced them in any way:—

"Dear friend and the most honoured guest! what is it that makes the state in which we all live look so gloomy and sad, devoid of peace and hope? Certainly we are not responsible for this state of things. 'The corruption of the state' is a hackneyed phrase. Pull out this superstition—hatred of Kings! It is stupid work—killing Kings and an Emperor! It increases the evil that it meant to cure, it never does any lasting good either to the country or to the people. Your study and experience must have taught you this much at least. You have come to the Court of an Emperor of India, and have threatened to overthrow his Empire if your advice is not followed. You were ill-advised, and the cause you pleaded has fallen flat to the ground. You accused us on all sorts of charges. Need I tell you they were all false and libellous? No one else but you could do this. You have been the acknowledged friend of the Pandavas and our worst enemy. There you were justified in misleading us as you did, as our enemy's friend. The Pandavas are weak and incapable of doing any harm to us. I do not see any one on this earth who can win his aim by threat only, as you propose to do. Rest assured that we will not bow down our heads even to the King of Heaven. It was quite useless for you to indulge in all sorts of idle threats and we must tell you that we are neither moved to fear nor impressed by your arguments. We are not at all afraid of dying the death of heroes. O Sri Krishna! you will not succeed in your trick now—you did so once before, when the Pandavas got a share of the paternal Kingdom and I was young and inexperienced. You succeeded then only because I, out of fear or ignorance, had agreed to it; but now know it for certain that the Pandavas will not have a piece of ground even so little as the point of a sharp needle so long as I am alive."

Durjodhana took his seat amidst the cheers of his friends and brothers, but the entire assembly was seized with a sort of panic and whispers ran from lip to lip among many. There was complete silence which was broken by the words of Sri Krishna:—"My good friend! I never deceived you or anybody in my life! I am never weary of doing well to all; and I must say you complimented me well, after securing my

trained army which you want to use against the Pandavas. I had given distinct pledge of my *bona fide* behaviour towards you all and now you are not at all ashamed of accusing me in the fashion you did. Very well! you have come out in your true colours before the world. You are so proud of your fame of dying a hero in the battle-field that, in the near future, you shall meet the doom you desire. You will know very soon that the mere accident of birth cannot make one a King or an Emperor. A King must have more thought, sympathy and love for his subjects and their lives and properties than for his own ambition and selfishness. The world will be happy when its inhabitants are guided by a God-fearing, honest, intelligent and benign ruler like Yudhisthira. It is for this reason that autocracy is admired as the best and noblest form of Government in India. I praise your courage and frankness but at the same time I cannot help condemning the Kuru Court that it should allow itself to be presided over by a wretch who will land the Kshatriya race in fearful carnage, if not decimation. History will record the curse of the Great God against the leader and impotent King who helped the downfall of all the wicked Kings of India who will share his fate. O! little you know the cruel fate that awaits you in the field of battle, which you are so eager to enter! You searched and found nothing wrong or incriminating in your conduct towards the Pandavas whom you think weak and incapable. Have you forgotten how, in your childhood, you attempted to kill Bhima by poisonous snakes and by throwing him into the river, bound by ropes—but unsuccessfully? Have you not tried to burn them, with their mother, in the lac house at Baranavata—again unsuccessfully? Have you forgotten who released you all from the grip of cruel conflict at Draupadi's Svayamvara? Have you forgotten who released you all from imprisonment by the Gandhara King, Chitra Sen, in the woods, when you went with family and friends to chastise the Pandavas? Have you forgotten who spared your lives when you fled defeated, from the battle-field of the Matsya kingdom after your cowlifting expedition? Yet you call the Pandavas weak and incapable! What a shameless creature you are! Who else but you could think of depriving Yudhisthira of his Empire by deceitful means! Who else but you could stoop so low as to disgrace your family prestige by bringing Draupadi before the open Kuru Court and insulting her as you and your brother and friends did! Who else but you could encourage foolish Karna and Dushasana to

crack vulgar jokes at the Pandavas when they were going to the forest! Yet you call yourself an honourable man worthy of occupying the throne of India! Shame ! Shame! Before I go I have one sacred duty to perform. It is this—that I must tell the Kuru elders that they did not do their bounden duty before, but, if they now neglect their duty of averting the cruel war, they will feel the evil consequences themselves." These words created a sensation. The breasts of the elders were filled with misgivings and fear. There was no more actual reverence for the blind Dhritarastra than for a parade of performing pigs in a circus procession. Durjodhana, who had left the assembly with his friends, was summoned by his mother before Dhritarastra but all the good words of advice could not do any good; on the contrary, Durjodhana with his friends was holding a consultation to decide whether to imprison Sri Krishna. Vidura told Durjodhana openly: "What a great fool you are—what the great heroes and Asuras like Naraka, Arishta, Dhenuka, Chanura, Aswaraja could not do, you want to do by capturing the great hero, Sri Krishna."

Sri Krishna said:—"Let him try, there is no harm! But let the fool remember, I am not Yudhisthira that I shall silently brook all his insults, looking upon the elders to correct him and his friends. Relying on this, Yudhisthira let himself, his wife and brothers be insulted by Dushasana and Karna. Let me finish the work speedily, let me despatch you and your friends, as I did Sisupala. You Kuru elders seem to be puppets in his hands, as you could do nothing when Durjodhana, his brothers and his friends misbehaved, when Dhritarastra said that he was powerless to do what was right and proper. Alas! what is inevitable will happen in the circumstances. I have tried my very best to avert the great war."

Sri Krishna acted impartially throughout, yet the Kuru Court circulated the false report that Sri Krishna and Kunti tried to bribe Karna with offers of a kingdom, which bribe Karna did not accept.

A courageous and commanding air, a resolute and assured bearing gave Sri Krishna a grand appearance possessed by none of the Vedic Gods. He appeared before a Court, ruled by youths and their elders who were all governed by a general desire for advancement and for the pleasures of the senses and with no apparent wish for fame or for the esteem and love of humanity. The fierce spirit of war was abroad in the world—and it had been self-sought. The great Sri Krishna went to soothe the

savage spirit with fear, reason and friendship. In the West, Jupiter was represented to have Justice and Law in each of his hands to signify that all the actions of a conqueror were lawful and just.

The Virata Parvana expanded the greatness of the Pandavas in India, and the peace mission of Sri Krishna opened the eyes of all to his great personality, power of observation and the real earnestness for the good of mankind which was apparent in his intrepid exposition of the true object of the Pandavas in giving up all their possessions without any protest after the game of dice and in remaining silent, but indignant, observers of the inhuman conduct of the Kurus towards the virtuous Draupadi. The Pandavas were the favourite sons of God; Sri Krishna represented Divine Love, the spirit of Heaven; and the great sages seemed to have been the Holy Ghost of the Trinity of religion.

Before the everlasting sleep of rest on the battle-field, the spirit of God showered the sacred sweetness which began to purify and ennoble the inmost nature of Bhisma, when he became a devotee of Sri Krishna. He had seen in a vision before him a face so lovely, so grand, so attractive and warm with Divine Love that it drew near to a likeness of the Great Divinity whom one would embrace as God, the Omnipotent Father. Not for nothing did he give everything for his parent's happiness.

The Kuru elders and sages saw as in a great vision Sri Krishna as God himself; even the blind Dhritarastra did not miss it. Such was the great influence of the Divine personality of Sri Krishna in the Kuru Court! He was later on accepted as God himself and not an incarnation. They saw in that dream that all the great sages of the past were worshipping him as God of the Universe. This image of Universal goodness with all its attributes was called Virata Purusha.

Chapter XX.

The Great War of Kurukshettra.

The peace of Heaven seems to have been disturbed by the revolt of Durjodhana against the grand mission of peace and reconciliation. It was a majestic conception of Divine Love that the God of Divine Love should disregard the wicked propensities of Durjodhana and his associates and should appear before them without entreaty by them to warn them in time of the great risk they were running and of the disaster and death which lay ahead of them. It was an entertaining piece of evidence of how the Great God, full of compassion for all, extends His mercy and love to the fallen human beings, warning them of the impending distress which they cannot foresee and counselling them to fight the Devil on earth below. The Hindu Puranas presented to the world the descent of the Great God or His Divine messenger, Narada, to bring about the salvation of the soul by the removal of the tyrants of the ages. The ignorant men look for miracles to uphold their faith and belief in God; but the crown of immortality was given by the wise men of the day to the dramatists like Vyasa and Valmiki who demonstrated the truth of Hindu philosophy that God is manifest in the soul and in human frames to establish a just relationship between God and His best creation, man, who was made after His image. Even the western poet Browning felt it and sang :—

"Ah! but a man's reach should excel his grasp!"

The celestial sage Narada described Heaven to Yudhisthira and delivered to him a message from the great Pandu, who was leading a happy existence there, to perform the great Rajasuya sacrifice at Indraprastha, for which the help of Sri Krishna was sought. The great tyrant of the age, Jarasandha, who was aspiring to the Emperorship of India, was removed and the pious wish of Pandu was fulfilled in the Rajasuya sacrifice where Sri Krishna was worshipped. Sri Krishna was not biased; he went to the Kuru Court to try and establish the peace and happiness of all. He was rejected as a deceiver by Durjodhana, his friends and associates. They on the other hand declared a war of vengeance on no pretext

at all. The past traditions and power of the great Lunar dynasty were abused and degraded, showing the great fall and degeneration of the Dark Age under the wicked Durjodhana. Durjodhana did not listen to the good advice of his parents who showed that the rules and customs of succession in the great family did not entitle him to succeed to a throne which his father had never occupied as by birth-right*. All attempts at peace and reconciliation proved futile. The Kuru Court, presided over by Durjodhana, seemed like a flock of sheep led by such individuals as Karna or Sakuni. The names of the wicked ministers were significant of their evil intentions in the very meanings which they implied. Karna meant "ear," *i.e.*, he poisoned the ears of Durjodhana; and Sakuni meant "vulture," who fanned and flamed the greediness of Durjodhana. Enjoyment of the senses was the ruling principle of Durjodhana's life. His reciprocity of love, affection and regard was more or less based on selfish considerations rather than on any question of justice or relationship. He was for creating a sort of strict discipline, loyalty, law and order, presided over by military strength and power. The prize posts were held bv his favourites who followed him faithfully and carried out every one of his ambitious schemes. Rich rewards were given to them when they were successful, unmindful of the just rights of others. Naturally they largely contributed to his imagination, to his airy schemes; to the imagination much human sorrow and even the idea of Hell has been ascribed by the great philosophers and poets. The selfish rule of Durjodhana, as represented in the Government of the Kuru Court, was nothing less than a fool's paradise. Sri Krishna witnessed the dance of the devils there, of which he told Yudhisthira on his return, and he did not disguise his own feeling of great compassion and sorrow at the disgraceful conduct of Durjodhana and others at the Kuru Court. He regretted very much the impending war which could not be averted. He did all he could so that the cruel and fearful destruction of human beings might be avoided. War dates back from the very creation by Brahma. Then it was a question of existence and power. There was a fight between the Gods and the Asuras, who were step-brothers, for the possession of Heaven and its rule. The world was not then satisfied with all sorts of philosophic expositions of God; God was represented as a blind, indifferent, natural force or atom producer and not an animal of overpowering strength and body, half man and half

* Udyoga Parvana, Chap. CXLIX.

animal, like Nrisingha Deva who killed Hiranyakasipu, an Asura of great strength from whose body came the great Prahlada, the greatest devotee of Vishnu or Hari. The first human Avatara of God, Vamana (dwarf), sent Bali to the nether region called Patala for his great vanity and presumption of charity. This was a novel dramatic war in the Pouranic Age. The great conception of God created a war in the human imagination till the idea of Divine Love was accepted by the celestial ministrel Narada, when the Kings and priests were tired of sacrifices and festivals to propitiate Vedic Gods for earthly prosperity and success in life. The accepted ideals were then found misleading and mistaken. The world is a great battle-field of Nature. The Sun fights with the sky, the light with darkness, as day with night, life with death, wind with water. Nor is this all. The volcanos and earthquakes, belching forth fire and molten lava, destroy the beautiful creations of God—the streamlets, rivers, dales and valleys full of fruits and flowers, happy human beings, birds and beasts. It seems necessary to experience the nature of a storm in order to appreciate the value of peace and prosperity.

Woman is held to be the last of God's creation, to help the work of creation and for the good of mankind. Mother and father were worshipped as earthly Gods because the happiness of a family depended on their good management and protection. Parents are endowed with unselfish love and devotion and for this also they were worshipped as Gods. The soul of the Almighty Father is reflected there. Dhritarastra and Gandhari and the Kuru elders were called upon by Sri Krishna to control Durjodhana and his friends, but they failed miserably—which was one of the causes of the great war.

In the early history of civilisation in India the various powers struggled for the possession of the wealth of other countries and for suzerainty over all. There was also war to suppress rebellion of subjects or to dethrone an unjust ruler. In fact, war was always undertaken with some principle or other. But there was never a war in defence of popular rights against the aggression of the aristocracy, for the Government used to be run on the rational basis that the nation's advancement, growth and prosperity should come before all. The people believed that the society of human beings should, more or less, be dependent on moral laws framed for the good of the general public and for the safety of their lives and property, instead of being for the satisfaction of the whims and caprices

of an autocrat like Sisupala, Durjodhana, Kamsa or Jarasandha. The world is not attracted by the moving statue of lovely flesh, perfect in form and colour whose outward beauty, power of wealth and military strength can command respect and authority.

This had been the prevailing idea of the people of the civilised nation of India. The good Queens of those days were all intelligent, wise and chivalrous who understood politics and religion and used to stand against any unjust aggressions. The mother of the Pandavas, Kunti, was not afraid of the war, but urged her sons individually to fight and pressed Arjuna to follow Draupadi's words and advice in the war*. The story of the Vidula Sanjaya was the great message good Kunti sent to her sons through Sri Krishna, in which the queen mother encouraged her sons to fight and recover the lost Kingdom from the unjust usurper†. Even the good Gandhari told her wicked son, Durjodhana, openly that he would be ruined by an unjust war and would make his parents grieve for the deaths of their children. People believed in a King or an Emperor who would deal nobly with all and become an example to others. He must teach everyone self-respect and observe truth and duty. This was the ideal example which was set by Yudhisthira, for whose cause Sri Krishna and other Kings of India waged war against the usurpers of his throne. The rule of a Satan was reflected in Durjodhana's prosperity and increasing wealth. But meanwhile the barren fields brought forth any amount of corn through the energy and labour of the Pandavas. That they should not be allowed to reap the benefit of their labours was neither fair nor just—for which the war of righteousness was declared.

Sri Krishna went as a Doctor to treat Durjodhana and his friends as patients, to distinguish between their false appetite and real wants, and to advise good measures for the preservation of his health and life; but the dying patient did not follow his advice. Death followed inevitably in such a case. The Kurus and their allies declared war for the selfish motives of satisfying their own ambition and lust of power and to feed their envy and jealousy in the best way possible. The Pandavas fought because they would not swerve from their duty. "Neither could we make peace with the Kurus at the sacrifice of our own interests and principle." Durjodhana did not seek virtue nor

* Udyoga Parvana, Chap. CXXXVI.

† Ibid Chap. CXXXIII.

did he intend to carry out the pledge of his father. Everyone admitted the right of Yudhisthira to the Empire which he won and inherited. Sri Krishna tried to decide the issue in a single combat between two heroes of the two parties; but Durjodhana did not agree to it. This diplomacy of Sri Krishna's was to prevent an appalling loss of lives between the two forces in a great war; and it was to a certain extent adopted in the fight between Bhima and Jarasandha. It was true that fighting was the profession and pastime of the Kshatriya race in those days, but it could not be denied that it must be guided by just principles and honesty of purpose—which are the best remedies of all the miseries that beset mankind. It was of no use parading all sorts of threats through the messengers who had visited the opposing parties to declare war between them. Oratory could not hide by ingenious and clever explanations the real determination to fight.

The current Mahabharata presents the war incidents in many sections under the names of the defeated generals; but against these there is the unvarnished true account of the great war by an eye-witness of the calibre of Sri Krishna, describing them before his own father, King Vasudeva, at Dwarka*.

It cannot be overlooked that the war incidents were described by Sanjaya to Dhritarastra through the Divine power of sight, as they had taken place from day to day in the battle-field. This was through the power of Yoga philosophy into which Sanjaya was initiated by the illustrious Vyasa. This is nothing but romance and imagination, and justifies the words of Aristotle that epic poetry should contain something more than a mere tragedy. There must be some improbable and incredible element from which the most surprising results can be achieved—gifted heroes with semi-divine natures who have accomplished deeds that would be incredible if done by a mortal hero.

It is not explained why the different war sections in the current Mahabharata were named after the vanquished generals of the defeated side instead of after those of the victorious generals. Nor is this all. Each section contains not only graphic descriptions of the war in progress but is full of many repetitions and contradictions of stories and incidents found elsewhere in the Mahabharata. The fanciful glories of the Kuru generals like Bhisma, Drona, Karna and Salya were used to detract from the great victory of the Pandavas. Durjodhana's preparation and setting out of the battle-field was limited to the choosing

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* **Asvamedha Parvan.**

of generals for the field of action; one after another he sent them to their doom; his own distance from the actual field of action and the fierce carnage leads one to compare him to Nero who fiddled while Rome burnt.

The two armies of the contending parties fought on the vast plain called Kurukshettra, north-west of modern Delhi. The Kuru forces were led by Bhisma and the Pandavas' forces were led by Dhrishtadyumna and Bhima. Arjuna, with Sri Krishna, was at the head of the superintending forces on the battle-field. Monstrous elephants careered over the field trampling on foot soldiers, making horses flee in all directions and dealing destruction with their trunks and tusks. Ponderous iron maces and clubs clashed with tremendous force, arrows hurtled through the air, trumpets, conches, kettle-drums and horns produced the battle music which excited the forces to action and gave the signal of the impending dangers so that the army might not be stupefied with fear. Each chief had a conchshell (Sankha) for a trumpet, which, as well as his principal weapon, has a name as if it was personified. Arjuna blew his shell called Devadatta (God-given) and carried a bow named Gandiva. Sri Krishna sounded a shell made of the bones of the demon Panchajana and hence it was called Panchajanya. Bhima blew a great trumpet named Paundra and Yudhisthira sounded his, called Anantabijoya (or " eternal victory ").

Great men rejoice in adversity like brave soldiers triumphing in a war. Calamity is man's true touchstone. Constant exposure to danger will inspire contempt for it. Man triumphs without glory when he conquers without danger. Calamity is an opportunity to show one's virtue but prosperity tempts one to play the fool. This has been the great lesson in the lives of the great men of India. What a great blessing to have a friend like Sri Krishna, full of love, so trusty, fearless and comforting! What chariot in war is so useful as that driven by a true friend, full of wise judgment and skilful in manœuvring the warriors into a victorious position. Sri Krishna relieved the cares of the Pandavas by his good counsels, their sadness by his good humour; even his good looks used to give them comfort.

The death of the fictitious old grandfather Bhisma was given a very great prominence in the Mahabharata. It may be described in the words of Seneca, the Chief Minister and tutor of the Emperor Nero: " Before old age I took care to live well, in old age I take care to die well, but to die well is to die

willingly." The death of the other fictitious general and teacher of the Kuru Prince, Drona, may be capped by Tennyson's lines:—

"The grand old name of gentleman,
Defamed by every charlatan,
And soiled with all ignoble use"*.

The Kuru generals thought that Abhimanyu's death would close the fight; but just the reverse happened. Arjuna was not a coward. He fought the fight to a finish saying:—"Go on and grow in valour, seeing the fight in spirit. Nobody can now touch your body. O beloved! this is the path of immortality!" Fortune befriends the bold. Poor Karna! Arjuna killed his beloved son before him. Jayadratha was killed in revenge for Abhimanyu's death, and at last his life's ambition to fight a battle with Arjuna was fully satisfied. His head torn from his shoulders, his body lay mutilated and nameless, disfigured by blood and arrows—a horrid monster, tortured by a wound in his breast. He roared and died:—"The fame of my glory will survive ages; victory is ours." He died, dreaming on this false picture of victory. Durjodhana died the death of a coward: he fled from danger and took shelter in the lake of Dwaipayana, but death gave no quarter to the timid and unwarlike youth.

The single combats worthy of note were between Sikhandi, Dhristyadyumna, Arjuna and Yudhisthira on one side, Bhisma Drona, Karna and Salya on the other side; and the last, though not the least, was the fight between Bhima and Durjodhana which decided the great war. Durjodhana was a coward and begged for his life from Yudhisthira; but it was refused. The grounds for the refusal may be expressed in these lines:—

"They that fight and run away
May turn and fight another day.
But he that is in battle slain
Will never rise to fight again"

The mothers and wives of such cowards would not accept them. Such was the ancient idea of Kshatriya chivalry!

Far from battle's toil and slaughter,
By a dark and limpid lake,
Sad and slow and faint Durjodhan,
Did his humble shelter take;
But the valiant sons of Pandu,
With the hunter's watchful care,
Thither tracked their fallen foeman
Like a wild beast in its lair!

* In Memoriam, Canto CXI.

"Gods be witness," said Durjodhan,
Flaming in his shame and wrath,
"Boy to manhood ever hating
We have crossed each other's path;
Now we meet to part no longer,
Proud Durjodhan fights you all,
Perish he, or sons of Pandu,
May this evening see your fall!"
Bhima answered: "For the insults
Long endured but not forgiven,
Me alone you fight, Durjodhan,
Witness righteous Gods in Heaven!"

In this poetic description is the cowardice of Durjodhana portrayed. Taunts draw him from his lair and the contest is begun:—

Like the thunder-wielding Indra,
Yama monarch of the dead,
Dauntless Bhima and Durjodhan
Fiercely strove and fought and bled!
Sparks of fire shot from their maces
And their faces ran with blood,
Neither won and neither yielded,
Matched in strength the rivals stood.

Durjodhana lifted high above the ground his ponderous mace to kill Bhima by a stroke, but dauntless Bhima broke the blow with such severe force that not only was the mace broken but also the thigh of Durjodhana was broken into two pieces; and a tremendous cry resounded with terrific force as Durjodhana fell to the ground. In a moment Bhima had kicked Durjodhana on the head, which blow caused his death.

Nothing remained of the monstrous force of the Kurus but Asvathama, Krita-Varman, Kripa and Yujutsu, the only remaining son of Dhritarastra, by a Vaisya wife. Dhritarastra and his wife were overwhelmed with grief for the death and destruction of their family and Kingdom. Vidura and Sanjaya relieved them of their grief, pointing out to them that their sons were predestined to die the deaths of heroes. The good Gandhari would have cursed the Pandavas if they had not convinced her of this and had not described the great heroism of the Kuru party. This was the foundation of the Kuru Mahabharata. Charvaka, the wicked philosopher and adviser of Durjodhana, was detected and killed. The good Yudhisthira was not at all in good spirits after his triumphs but shed bitter tears of lamentation, considering himself to be the real cause

of this fearful carnage and decimation among the royal families of India.

The Srimad Bhagavata Gita, the most popular and revered book of the present day, gives out a doctrine in which Sri Krishna maintains the superiority of Faith over knowledge as a means of salvation. This has been introduced in the Bhisma Parvan of the Mahabharata. The Srimad Bhagavata and the Bhagabata Gita are inter-allied and quite different from the Mahabharata, for they betray a higher state of development in the Sri Krishna cult, superseding the doctrines of the Vedas and Hindu philosophies.

The great war sequel sounded the death-knell of the great bid for Empire. An everlasting Promethean punishment was meted out to Asvathama for the most inhuman massacre at night of the tired Panchala princes and soldiers sleeping in the Pandava Camp after the great victory. The hell into which the exiled Parasurama and suffering Asvathama were cast or thrown by divine dispensation is still believed in by people who throw oil even now, in sympathy, to stop the burning sensation of Asvathama's wound on the head which was inflicted by the Pandavas. The great political party of Conservatives disappeared with the rise of the Liberals with whom the Pandavas and the Yadus were closely identified. The war carried away the sinful and the sin.

The sinners lay disfigured in the great field of Kurukshettra, retaining expressions of infinite sadness. The great war was called a religious war, like a Crusade, and was not regarded as an ordinary fight for the throne between the Kurus and the Pandavas.

The closing war incidents were described through a boon of Siva to the degenerate Brahmana general, Asvathama. The fictions concerning the war did not end with this only; but the old Dhritarastra, wishing to be revenged for the killing of all his sons, is said to have wanted to embrace Bhima. Sri Krishna, the great adviser of the Pandavas, it was said, kept ready an iron image of Bhima for the purpose. The old man was paid in his own coin when he got hurt in trying to kill the iron Bhima by his fond embrace. Sri Krishna told Dhritarastra that his dead sons would not be revived by killing Bhima, who had to satisfy the good Gandhari that he had not drunk the blood of her sons and Durjodhana was not killed by him in an unfair fight, his hip being broken by the force of his mace which Bhima had countered in self-defence. Yudhisthira, covering his body with

clothes, fell before the parents of Durjodhana, asking forgiveness for all he had done; he was no longer anxious to live, because of the great grief that they and others had been suffering for which he alone was responsible and no one else. It was said that the angry eyes of Gandhari burnt a toe of Yudhisthira's feet which was not covered; but it cannot be overlooked that Gandhari used to cover up her eyes in sympathy with the blindness of her beloved husband. Dhritarastra and Gandhari were both surprised to find Yudhisthira overcome with such great grief instead of being elated with his great success in the war. All the wealth and men sacrificed in the prosecution of the great war were to be fully compensated by the establishment of a good, stable, religious and just Government under the wise and virtuous Yudhisthira; but he refused to be installed after the great victory. It was a strange irony of fate for which the great dying general, Bhisma, was called upon to read a lecture to Yudhisthira (the Shanti and Anusasana Parvanas).

Power is dangerous if it is not controlled by a cool head. For this reason wherever Sri Krishna was in charge of the victor's chariot, there the victory fell to him. Passion and excitement transformed men into fools in the battle-field, but such could never be the case where Sri Krishna was the charioteer.

The great war was in the nature of a deliberate visitation of God to liberate the good and virtuous men and women from the persecutions of the tyrants. This Sri Krishna preached in the Kuru Court with sincerity. Grand was his gesture of unselfish generosity in parting with his best soldiers to the Kurus. It drew him nearer to a likeness of God Divine.

Death is the greatest act of mercy in dealing with the hopelessly useless persons who are corrupting good society. The good should prosper and become immortal by their examples and the wicked should die and rot in hell. This was the law of the land then prevalent, and the great war demonstrated it. The tyrants were swept away not by Nature's tornado, flood or earthquake but by the force of arms and of the justice of God.

The tyrants by their own actions went to meet death at the hands of Yudhisthira. The Kurus were the aggressors and the Pandavas were the defenders. Yudhisthira spread before the world the great truth that solemn faith and service to God and humanity by silent sufferings crowned him with sure victory. He showed men how to love truth and yet be charitable, how to bear wrongs and oppressions and yet not treasure

one personal injury or insult. This is the religion of Divine Love whose light is Sri Krishna and whose shadow is Draupadi. The Shanti Parvana* gives a discourse between Sri Krishna and Arjuna in the version of Janmejoya and Vaisampayana. Here Narayana is worshipped and not Sri Krishna. Krishna worship was a later development.

Sri Krishna took to task the weak cowards like Durjodhana and his father, who were mere slaves of passion and did not spare Karna, Bhisma, Drona, Sakuni, etc., who were the warriors. They sacrificed the lives of so many creatures devoted to their cause but were never prepared to sacrifice anything themselves, not even five little villages, insignificant in comparison with the vast well-developed Empire. It is the Divine law that such vicious men should not by their examples contaminate the whole world.

The last funeral rites of the fallen heroes were performed with due ceremonies as a State function. The bereaved families of the great heroes were consoled in every way possible by the good Yudhisthira, his brothers and the female members of the family. It was said that Vyasa brought to life the fallen heroes and that their families were relieved of their grief by the sight and knowledge that they were in better regions than the earth here below. When those spirits disappeared their widows followed them. In other words, many widows drowned themselves in the river out of grief. It is indeed a very poetic way of confirming the belief that those Kshatriyas go to Heaven who die in the battle-field without showing their backs to the enemies. The ladies of the Pandavas were also weeping over the sad destruction of their near and dear ones. The death of the children of the Pandavas was a catastrophe. The line of the Pandavas was going to be extinct through this inhuman war. When Abhimanyu's wife, Uttara, gave birth to a stillborn child, the grief of the family knew no bounds. Poor Uttara was going to take her own life. Subhadra and Kunti entreated Sri Krishna to do what was necessary. Sri Krishna ascribed it to the effect of Asvathama's Brahma weapon which he neutralised by the force of his virtue of truthfulness. This was considered to be a great miracle. Everyone was filled with joy. Sri Krishna made valuable presents to the child—He became his Godfather and named him Parikshit, who would maintain and uphold the great tradition of Divine Love and by his piety be able to nullify the power of the curses of the angry Brahmanas.

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* **Shanti Parvana, Chap. CCCXLII and CCCXLIII.**

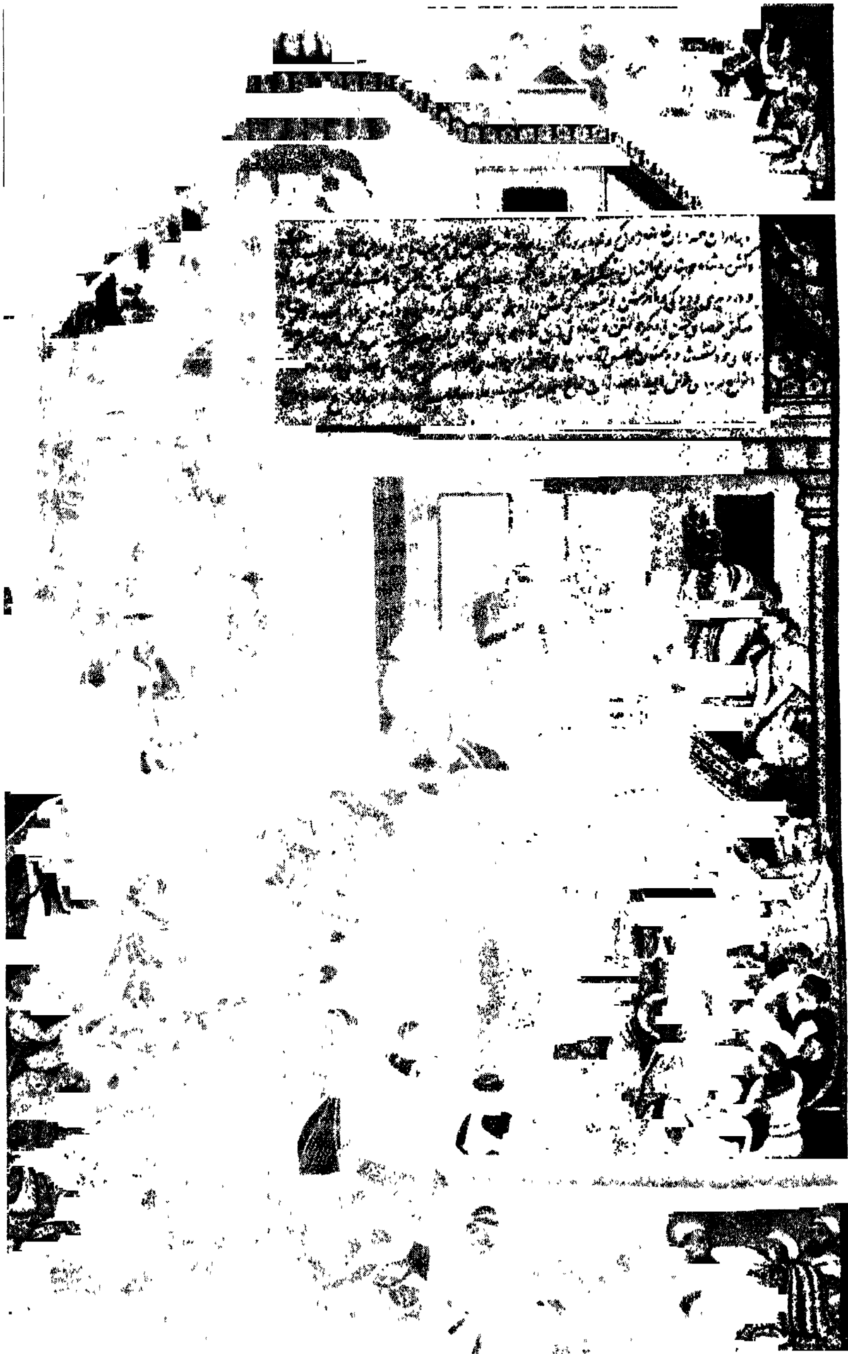
CHAPTER XXI.

The Horse Sacrifice of Yudhisthira.

The political and religious history of the India of the traditional past intrudes in the events of the Indian epics. The triumphs and conquests were celebrated in the forms of religious sacrifices which proclaimed the victors' suzerainty over the conquered Provinces and Principalities. The great King Bharata* who performed the cow and horse sacrifices was distinguished with the title of an Emperor and his descendants were known as the Bharatas. Yudhisthira was the great hero of the Bharatas and he performed two sacrifices, the Rajasuya at Indraprastha and the Asvamedha at Hastinapur. The great King Rama Chandra of the Solar dynasty and the hero of the Ramayana who only performed the one sacrifice of Asvamedha was deified as an Avatara (incarnation of God). Yudhisthira, the hero of the Mahabharata, was held to be an incarnation of Justice and Virtue. An era opened with the accession of Yudhisthira and it is recognised even now in Hindu almanacs.

The Bharata Samhita was originally nothing else but a manual of instructions as to how to perform sacrifices and the duties of Kings and information on the four stages of life and the four orders of Hindu society for those who had to administer the societies of ancient India. All these were incorporated in the Shanti and Anusasana Parvans of the Mahabharata in brief form and they were amplified with examples and stories in the Mahabharata to be recited at such royal sacrifices as Rajasuya and Asvamedha. The rival sects and groups of religious faiths fought openly for victory in their learned discussions there, and the importance of these sacrifices was thus increased in time; the attendance of the great sages and learned men who were rewarded with rich presents began to be record ones. The growth of these sectarian views eventually threatened to destroy the solidarity of Hindu faith and religion. Kapila was the great reformer of the day in the reign of King Sagara and he opposed the Asvamedha sacrifice and Gomedha sacrifice of King Nahusa. Janmejoya II injured the Rishi Gargya's son and was cursed

* **Adi Parvana, Chap. LXXIV, Verses 131-133.**



THE GREAT FEAST BEFORE THE HORSE SACRIFICE.

by Gargya; he was abandoned by his people, and was in great affliction; he sought help from the sage Indryota Saunaka, who purified him with a horse sacrifice. Vasistha, the great priest, established the God Narayana in the sacrifice of King Basuhoma and Vasistha's descendant Vyasa followed him in establishing the great God of Divine Love, Sri Krishna. Vyasa and Sri Krishna advised Yudhisthira to perform the sacrifice of Asvamedha after the great war of Kurukshettra. Doubts were heard and raised by an atheist like Charvaka about the value and efficacy of these Vedic sacrifices and about the theory of the merits and demerits of good and bad works in the final passing of the soul from the body according to the fiat of the great dispenser of justice on the day of judgment. In the great war the atheist Charvaka paid the penalty of death. Durjodhana, the wicked Satan of the age, and all his followers were killed in the great battle-field of Kurukshettra, which Kuru, the founder of the great family who established and christened it with his name, converted into a great shrine by the boon of the Vedic God Indra; and it is even now respected and visited as a great shrine of the Hindus. The Hindu religion does not demand a blind faith but the pursuit of truth and knowledge through culture, education and practical experience in actual life. There is involved no renunciation of the selfish world; no system of Yoga is really necessary to reach the goal of life. The salvation of the soul of a human being lies in the knowledge of universal love, when a man can look upon all creatures as his friends and not as his enemies. He is his own enemy who is the enemy of everything human, just and reasonable, who seduces others for his selfish ends and ambition and who thus tries to undo the great work of the just Creator. There is no difference between an ideal man and God, and Sri Krishna is presented in the Mahabharata as an example of this; he fought his way and reached the great goal with his adherents, the Pandavas and others like Kunti, Draupadi, Subhadra and Uttara.

The Mahabharata represents the gradual development throughout the ages of an ideal till the true ideal is reached in the Gods and Emperors of India. How feeble and pale Yudhisthira looked amid all his triumphs! The energy and inspiration which had held him up were exhausted. He had faithfully performed his office of trust and was now seeking a further sacred message in all earnestness as to what to do next. This troubled him very much. The men of rank and dignity were all taken by surprise, quite unable to understand the true

meaning of his anxiety and anguish. Every ingenuous and aspiring soul leaves some doctrine behind him, which he formulates in accordance with his own experience. If riches increase, they are increased that use them. If the gatherer hoards them, Nature takes them from him. If a man is wise he will dread a prosperity which only leaves him with more. The conferment of benefits is the aim of Nature but they must be rendered in return. He is great who confers the most benefits and he is base who renders none. The dice of God are always loaded. The world is a multiplication table. A perfect justice adjusts its balance in all parts of life. This was best illustrated in the lessons taught by the horse sacrifice. The horse sacrifice was nothing but a triumphant redistribution and rearrangement of an Empire and National Government, with an eye to making atonement for the horrible carnage. It was not a question of aggrandisement at the expense of the property and wealth of others, but merely a redistribution in the hands of proper men who would successfully administer the country according to the great ideal of the age. The Anusasana Parvan gives out that sins were atoned by gifts. A religious sacrifice like the Asvamedha was imperative after any great war when large numbers of people fell victims to death and destruction. A Government's first duty is to keep national sentiment in order. The dormant sentiment of the multitude was roused to a fever heat by the accounts of the patient sufferings of the Pandavas throughout all these years. The whole country went mad over King Yudhisthira. No man has ever been so much idolised or become the centre of so much hero-worship. An electric thrill of chivalrous enthusiasm pulsated through the entire country at the mention of Bhima and Arjuna. Every soul was stirred by the boldness and unselfish devotion to the just cause of the great Sri Krishna. Never before was the harmonious relationship between people and throne so conspicuous and so close. Every credit must be given for such a sentiment in the country towards the one man whose skill had knit all the circumstances as just so many causes and effects of events. The welcome that these wonderful human beings received in the great horse sacrifice was one of joy and religious reverence. It was not only the result of birth-right but also of proved ability and purity. Here Sri Krishna had no part to perform or any honour to receive beyond approving of it. Here lies the great difference between the two royal sacrifices of Yudhisthira, the great Emperor of India. It was Sri Krishna who preached the

religion of Divine Love in India and broke the political forces of conservatism which separated the aristocracy from the masses, the plebeians, from the patricians. He laid the cruel axe to its very foundation. The country breathed freely and spiritual power once more came into evidence to rule over temporal power. This is the true implication of the horse sacrifice of ancient India. It was not a sacrifice to mark the stacking of arms nor was it to collect tributes or to satisfy the Brahmanas with presents. Truly grand and majestic was the performance of such a sacrifice which heralded the lawful rights of humanity, denied to them by the tyrants in place and power. There was made the vow of fealty to the just Emperor which was an act that the situation then demanded. The promulgation of the name of the Emperor on the breast of a horse and the invitation to the Kings to swear the vow of fealty there was all part and parcel of the religious ceremony. It established a combination of powers in India for the peace and eternal glory of the nation and for the avoidance of internecine quarrels amongst Kings and Chiefs of India which would thereby weaken their strength against foreign invasion. A King or an Emperor is not a curse but the strong hand of justice to preserve the law and order of the land and teach the religion of God in his Divine unselfish love. The sacrifice was the expressed renewal of trust in an Emperor who won the Empire by a fight. The Emperor must become the centre of a people's heart and trust.

In the horse sacrifice Sri Krishna was present as abstract love, not as a participator of the sacrifice in a material form or in the features of man or God. The great sages purified Yudhisthira, now that he had recovered his Empire and the Kurus had passed into oblivion. Vyasa, Paila and Yajnavalkya were engaged in the performance of the sacrifice. The great war of Kurukshettra made the treasury empty and Yudhisthira pleaded that he was too poor to perform the horse sacrifice. Vyasa enlightened him with the story of King Marutta whose large hidden store of gold would provide the requisite expenses; Vyasa knew the location of this wealth. On the day of the full moon in the month of Chaitra (March-April) the great sacrifice began. Kings performed sacrifices through their own priests and also invoked the aid of other celebrated sages. The religious rites were then chiefly concerned with the Divine God and with the spiritual problems of the day. But they had a political significance as well. The horse sacrifice brought fame to many Kings as well as to the sages of the day. In the horse sacrifice the

chivalrous wanted to show their valour by fighting and others tried to evade paying tribute by mere submission.

The installation ceremony of a great Emperor consisted of a formidable array of ceremonies. Every means were contrived to add to the pleasures of the leisure hours; Kings, Princes, Chiefs and High Officials of the State prided themselves on their superior manners and did their utmost to make themselves agreeable, pleasant companions. Witty poets and learned reciters of genealogies and old histories were engaged to humour and amuse them, if not to enliven them with wisdom and sound advice. A great change seemed to have come over the whole Empire under the influence of a great mind; the inexplicable feeling of authority had come to give promise of a more happy future. Vajasaneyi Samhita* contains a prayer for the great sacrifice called Asvamedha, which can only be performed by an Emperor; and it is as follows:—

"O Brahman! May in this Kingdom the Brahmin be born who shines through sacred knowledge! May the warrior who is a hero, a skilful shot, a good marksman, and a powerful chariot-fighter, be born here! Also the cow which yields good milk, the ox which draws well, the swift horse; the good housewife! May to this sacrificer a hero-son be born who is victorious, a mighty chariot-fighter and eloquent in the assembly! May Parjanya send us rain according to our desire! May our fruit-bearing plants ripen! May happiness and prosperity fall to our share!"

It was a significant fact that Vaisampayana did not take part in the Asvamedha sacrifice; but his nephew Yajnavalkya was engaged in it, and he was the author of the Vajasaneyi Samhita and was said to have been the reviser of the Vaisampayana edition of the Mahabharata. Paila was the disciple of Vyasa and was celebrated for his learning of the Rig Veda. The Rig Veda with its ancillary Yajus and Samas was developed through reformed Brahmanism and was used in the sacrifice of the Aila Kings of India to which line Yudhisthira belonged. There was a remarkable woman, Ila, and her descendant was Dushyanta. From Dushyanta the line continued to Hastin (or Brhat), who founded or named Hastinapura, where the sacrifice took place. The sons and grandsons of King Hastin perpetuated distinct lines of Kings in different provinces of India which were at last united under the Government of Yudhisthira after the great war, as many lines of Kings became extinct. The

* Vajasaneyi Samhita: XXII: 22.

Pandavas had to set out to seek the treasure of Marutta; in addition they had to provide military escort for the sacrificial horse. Arjuna was instructed to do so but was given clear instructions to avoid the destruction of men, if possible. The protection of the Empire was left in the hands of Bhima, Nakul and Yujutsu, the surviving son of Dhritarastra who fought against his step-brothers and was placed on the throne in Yudhisthira's absence from the capital. Sahadeva was entrusted with the family affairs. Yudhisthira and Draupadi were whole-heartedly engaged in the preparation of the great horse sacrifice. Yudhisthira was very grateful to the illustrious Vyasa for his advice to seek out the wealth necessary for the sacrifice. Sri Krishna, Balarama, Satyaki and others came to it as guests. The sacred spot was chosen and proper accommodation for the performers of the sacrifice was provided. Numerous houses and mansions were built for the invited Kings and Princes of India. The city was decorated with triumphal arches and arrangements were made for the distribution of good food and drink, with all sorts of amusements, to entertain those who would come there to witness the great ceremony of the coronation of the Emperor. Vyasa fixed the day of the full moon in the month of Chaitra for the initiation rites. Yudhisthira honoured and praised Vyasa and Sri Krishna with due ceremonies. He openly ascribed the victory to the great genius of Sri Krishna.

The great King Yudhisthira utilised the wealth left by King Marutta; the wealth was carried by sixty thousand camels, one hundred and twenty thousand horses and one hundred thousand elephants. Besides, there were as many cars and carts. The keeping of a treasure trove was then considered just and lawful in India. The immense treasure gathered by that King was so great that the Brahmanas who performed his sacrifice could not take it away, and so it was utilised at a later age by Yudhisthira upon the advice of the law-giver, Vyasa. The great King Marutta was the grandson of King Karandhama of the Vaisala dynasty whose priest was the sage Angirasa, the father of Brihaspati and Samvarta. The former declined to be Marutta's priest so Samvarta was chosen to perform a sacrifice. The great God Indra could not wrong the King at the instance of Brihaspati, and the fee for the said sacrifice was given in gold. The King's daughter was also given to the priest.

The Mahabharata states that it was the first King Prithu who performed the horse sacrifice when he was given the

authority by the illustrious Sanat Kumar to preside over the destiny of all, after due discussions with the great sages like Kasyapa, Gautama, Atri and Markandeya. Atri was the priest of that King and received rich presents*. The question of priesthood was very important in those days, and Vyasa and Vasistha seem to have been the priests of the Bharata family of Kings ever since the days of King Sambarana.

The conquests made by Arjuna extended to Gandhara and the whole of India bounded by the sea and the Himalayas. The whole of this Empire was given away to the Brahmanas as fees for the performance of the great sacrifice. Vyasa and Sri Krishna advised Yudhisthira to exchange it for its value in gold, which was eventually done. It was said that what Vyasa got as the chief priest he gave to Kunti, and she gave it to Yudhisthira. It meant that the great war was waged for the protection of the Brahmanas and for the advancement of the country's wealth, religion and honour.

The Hindu religion was then dependent upon the four stages of life and the fourfold division of the caste system. The prosperity of the country depended on the performances of the duties of a householder. The backbone of a household was the good and dutiful mother, wife, daughter or daughter-in-law. Earth is represented as the mother of the heroes of India who defend and protect the countries. Kunti, famous for her forbearance, was the mother of the great Pandavas who defended and enriched the country and were ultimately victorious. The great priest accepted the Earth on behalf of the Brahmanas for the protection of spiritual life and its advancement, but left that earth in the hands of Yudhisthira through his mother, absolving him from all the sins committed in the great war. Yudhisthira's conscientious objection to ascending the throne after the fearful carnage was thus met by his taking it as a gift from his mother, after being purified by the religious ceremonies.

The Kshatriya Princesses, Queens and daughters in those days were trained in every branch of learning in order to be of material help to their relations in any emergency. The Brahmanas were the great priests and law-givers of the day and the Kings of the Bharata family were their great patrons from time immemorial. What a dazzling and ennobling picture would the coronation of an Emperor like Yudhisthira make!

The Mahabharata remarks on the appearance of a peculiar animal at the end of the sacrifice, when Vyasa and others were

* Vana Parvana, Chap. CLXXXV, Verses 25-31.

eulogising the great monarch on the successful completion of the great sacrifice. A mongoose of a golden colour with blue eyes denounced it loudly in a human voice. Everyone was surprised and demanded an explanation for it. The mongoose, it was said, was the God Dharma (righteousness) who was transformed into that shape by the curse of the sage Jamadagni, and Dharma came there to be relieved of the said curse. The God Dharma spoilt the milk intended for the Pitriyana worship (Sradha) of the sage Jamadagni, whereupon he was cursed, and he became free of it only by dispraising the great sacrifice of Yudhisthira. The true implication of this seems to have been that, without pure Divine Love, all kinds of sacrifices are of no value for the real emancipation of the soul. The mongoose related the story of an indigent Brahmana who performed a sacrifice with the paste of barley grain and went to Heaven for his true devotion and faith. Virtue is not acquired by rich gifts of wealth or land but the merit of virtue is dependent on the quality of the piety of the performer, even if the gift be as small as barley corn. "Rich gifts wax poor, if the givers prove unkind." That sacrifices should be performed with seeds of corn, as established in the reign of Basuhoma Uparichara, was mentioned by the illustrious Vyasa.

Yudhisthira was the ideal ruler of Ancient India who was to be installed after the great war with a religious ceremony, called Asvamedha, to absolve him and his brothers from all sins, intentional or otherwise. The reason for the ceremony was rather perhaps to see if there were other tyrants, who might grow stronger by neglect, left to oppose Yudhisthira. It was for this reason that Yudhisthira told his brother Arjuna when he went to guard the sacrificial horse that, if any foolish King obstructed its passage or challenged his authority then he was to conquer him by all means, though he forbade him to kill him. The sons of Bhagadatta, Jayadratha and Sakuni, were saved though they opposed Arjuna. Arjuna was however defeated by his own sons Babhruvahana and Chitrangada, like Rama Chandra was by his two sons, Laba and Kusa. The Princesses Chitrangada of Manipur and Ulupi of the Nagas, the mothers of those heroes and wives of Arjuna, were invited and brought to the sacrifice and duly introduced to all and received rich presents from the Emperor Yudhisthira.

Sri Krishna enlightened Arjuna in order to relieve him of the sorrow of losing his great son, Abhimanyu, with many interesting spiritual lessons of life, which homily is called the Anu Gita.

Within it there is an ode of Arjuna worshipping him as God. The sage Utamka came to curse Sri Krishna for not stopping the cruel carnage of the great war. Krishna explained to his satisfaction that he was not responsible for it and converted him as his devotee and gave him a boon. All these tell a tale that at the time of the horse sacrifice of Yudhisthira the incidents of war from the beginning to the end were discussed together with such subjects as the genealogies of Gods and sages and the divinity of Sri Krishna. In Chapters LX, LXI of the Asvamedha Parvan a description of the war was given by Sri Krishna.

Mention was made by Yudhisthira of his successor, Abhimanyu's son Parikshit, as well as of the successors of others who died in the war. In the great ceremony many Kings were declared: the heirs of dead Kings acknowledged to be the kings of their paternal lands and others received Kingdoms which were unrepresented through the extinction of royal lines in the war.

The external unity of the Empire had been achieved by the great war of Kurukshettra and internal cohesion was effected by the great religious ceremony of the coronation of Yudhisthira, called the Asvamedha sacrifice. An internal bond of great union was the common cultural basis of religion, tastes, habits and customs of the Hindu Aryan race among the heterogeneous population under the sway of the Emperor Yudhisthira: this common culture was of the greatest political importance in India. In political sagacity as well as religious proclivities the Pandavas at that time were without rivals, and their power and authority extended far beyond India proper. The soil of Hindusthan was holy ground which ought only to be in the hands of the chosen Hindus of India. This idea originated with the religion of the Hindus. It was not a common country but a common faith and religion which could unite the people into one nation. It was not a question of being contented with political vassalage and letting the people enjoy religious liberty. The defeated people were not allowed to sit and weep over their misfortunes and bereavements but were heartily called upon to co-operate in the coronation of the Emperor; strong religious fervour was excited by the striking attitude and policy of the new Emperor Yudhisthira with his devoted family and friends. To weld the different communities and nationalities of which the great Empire was composed into a homogeneous people was a great problem of the day. The only means of accomplishing it lay in inducing the subjects to adopt a common platform

of enjoyments and a common form of faith at the great coronation of the Emperor with the grandeur of its religious form of installation. The whole country, its enlightened people and Kings came in direct contact with all and specially had to pay respect to the religious preceptors and performers of the great sacrifice and to the revered Emperor of India. To defy the Imperial messenger with the invitation, who was riding on the horse, escorted by a body of armed soldiers under a capable commander, meant fight. The might and valour of the Pandavas as well as their policy and patience had become known all over India; they could make and unmake Kings at their will.

The highest aim and object of the religious coronation of the Emperor of India seems to have been to further the greatness and glory of the Imperial State which the Pandavas had done so much to found. The policy adopted by them might be said to be national rather than imperial. Internecine strifes in India were ruining the country and the good feeling between the bureaucracy of brains and the military authorities was gone since the time of Vena, Kartabiryarjuna and Visvamitra. To a man of wisdom with knowledge of politics it was manifest that the Emperor had to deal with a disaffected element in the community. The Brahmanas were, under Kuru rule, contending for the faith and traditions of their forefathers against a ruling house which was the patron of a party of atheists. It was only fair and just that after the death and removal of that party the victor should patronise the aggrieved Brahmanas, granting them wealth and power. This was done by Yudhisthira in the great Asvamedha sacrifice. The Brahmanas, Kshatriyas and all other communities of Hindu society wholeheartedly cooperated in the coronation of the Emperor of India. His was a reign of thirty-six years which marked the great progress of peace and prosperity in India. The parents of Durjodhana were greatly pleased with Yudhisthira and openly declared that they were happier than they had been at the time of their son's rule. No kind of intrigue or fight took place during his reign—no grave discontent of any kind on the part of his subjects or of the opponents of his power was visible. Yudhisthira built up the great independence of the country by a policy of prudence and diplomacy and fully maintained the great interests of all concerned—security of life, property and honour. There was no kind of separation between the spiritual and temporal power in his administration. Not for nothing was Yudhisthira called the incarnation of virtue and righteousness and an ideal

Emperor, with the epithet that he had no enemies in his time, which even the great King Rama Chandra, an Avatar of God, could not claim.

"Let the name of thy conqueror be set forth and the might of thy master be declared"; this was never to be written on the triumphal arches of Hastinapur palace while Yudhisthira was Emperor.

Chapter XXII.

Salvation.

The world is full of all sorts of speculations on the nature of Heaven and Hell. The wise sages of ancient India did not put upon the pedestal of religion a God of clay and worship him for the salvation of the human soul. Nor was it possible, by paying homage to the great Brahmans who made offerings to the image of God, to secure the expiation of sin, which practice in later times led people to accept Brahmanas as earthly Gods (Bhudebs) and to kiss their feet out of reverence and fear for their curses. In ancient India it was a religion of Faith and Duty. To rescue the regenerate Brahmans and Kshatriyas, the head and the shoulders of Hindu society, the illustrious Vyasa conceived the great Epic of India. The sage Utamka discussed the force of a curse with King Paushya.* It was said that there are remedies for all kinds of curses but that there is none whatsoever for curses uttered by a mother.† The pious sage Saurika rebuked his young son Sringi for having cursed King Parikshit with death for the foolish act of placing a serpent round his neck when he refused to answer the King's enquiry about the deer he was pursuing in the hunting expedition. The sage quoted the rulings of the Institute of Manu that a King in no way deserved to be cursed by the sages or Brahmans.‡ The great follower of Siva, the sage Utamka, was going to curse Sri Krishna for not preventing the great war of Kurukshettra; but he was convinced that he had been mistaken. He did not utter the curse; instead he became a great admirer of Sri Krishna and accepted a boon from him. It is an example of a conversion to the Krishna cult. This happened after the farewell of Sri Krishna in the great horse sacrifice of Yudhisthira.

The origin of drama is ascribed by the great western savants to the recitation of the great Indian Epic in the form of a passion play; its object was the achievement of happiness through

* Adi Parvana, Chap. III, Verse 126.

† Adi Parvana, Chap. XXXVII, Verse 4.

‡ Adi Parvana, Chap. XLI, Verse 33.

death. For this reason the great question of the path to heaven through death became the principal topic at the end of the dramatic Mahabharata.

Death is an illusion (Maya). It is represented by a female figure in the Mahabharata and Yama (Pluto) sits in judgment on human beings and inflicts death. Death is inevitable and common to all. There is a pause near death when men grow bold towards all things else. It is as if God's finger touches a being and withdraws the soul from within the body. It is in fact a call from Heaven. Death gives the greatest shock to the survivors, though it is happening every day. Nature must be renewed and death is little else but a change in the process of renewal; it is the great renovator of the world, as the poet said:—

> "All forms that perish other forms supply;
> By turns we catch the vital breath and die."—*Pope.*

The body alone perishes after death; the soul is immortal and existed before the birth of a man as a pure spirit, possessing within itself all the attributes of immortality. Death and the dissolution of the body are joyous events working for the liberation of the soul, as the body is no more than a temporary prison cell in which the soul is left to suffer. The human soul is represented as a witness of one's action and the prickings of conscience shows its connection with God and its influence on the good or bad actions of man. The soul, though it is imprisoned in a body of flesh and blood, can enjoy perfect peace and happiness when it is free from the enervating influence of the senses. The whole of human life is nothing but a journey towards the great gate of Heaven. It is death that opens the gates of Heaven or Hell after a man's due trial by Yama on the great day of judgment. The vigour of the soul in the human body is reflected in many ways, but it departs for good when death takes place. The story of Nachiketa and his visit to the realm of Yama and his return from there through the curse and boon of his father is unique. It is mentioned in the great Epic, and elsewhere.

Nature teaches beasts even to know their friends and enemies and provides them with the instinct to know when to fly and where to fight. If there were no deaths, then the world would have been too small for all the created beings with their multiplying children, and the sufferings would have been untold. No one has established scientifically, beyond the shadow of a doubt, what takes place after death. God has endowed every animal

with instinct and man with intellect to fight with death from very creation. One gives fight to another for his own existence. The lion, the king of beasts, kills the elephant by jumping at his head; the deer save themselves by their nimble feet and birds by their wings; but human brains overtake them all. Arms are the agents of Death and the protectors human life.

History presents the works of humanity through the Emperors, conquerors, heroes, priests, patriots and lawgivers, who were crowned with immortality for their great deeds and piety. Their sorrows and sufferings, privations and persecutions might necessarily have been very great but they were examples of fortitude and perseverence, intent upon reaching the great goal. Their glories and triumphs were endless and perpetuated by generation after generation. Punishment or reward of the good and bad acts of the past generation is to a certain extent representative of the translation of the wicked into a hell of fire and the good into the happy fragrant garden of Eden. The questions of heaven and hell are closely connected with human society as well as with spiritual speculation; in the past they were closely connected with the politics of India. The great lawgivers and priests had to preach to the people that if they sacrificed their lives for the defence of their country they would ascend to Heaven for their great patriotism and if not, then to Hell would they be consigned. The great Kings and Emperors were the patrons of these patriots who sought Heaven in the service of their country and in causing the deaths of thousands upon the battle-field. To obtain the correct contrast and effect, an illuminating picture of Hell and the redemption of Bhisma to Heaven must be described before presenting the passing of Yudhisthira to Heaven.

Kuru, the great forefather of the Kurus, foresaw the future events and created a royal road to Heaven through a boon of Indra, the King of Heaven, so that whosoever should die on Kurukshettra field would go to Heaven, even though he should lack any good works to his credit. The wicked Kurus believed that brave deaths in the battle-field outweighed bad lives or wars of aggression. Their fortune's great charms would misguide the opposers' swords. Prosperity is no less the friend of everyone than it is the friend of those whom fortune has raised the highest! It cannot be overlooked that the cruel massacre, resulting almost in the extinction of the Kurus and the Yadavas, was ascribed to the curses of the great sages like Narada,

Maitreya, Visvamitra and Kanva. They were not blessed with a perpetual lease of life like the fortunate few. The question of anachronism does not arise in a drama as the events described therein are not actual incidents of history. Sri Krishna was not even spared from the effects of a curse of the good Gandhari. Sri Krishna was not the hero of the Mahabharata, yet his end was referred to as having taken place with the destruction of the Yadavas, which seems quite out of place, especially as Sri Krishna repudiated all ordinary ties of humanity before the alleged physical occurrence of death. Who can talk of the grave and death of Sri Krishna, who resurrected Parikshita from the curse of Asvathama? There was to be no more talk of fighting and killing after the great battle of Kurukshettra. After it, there was only one thought—for the future good government and fellowship for which the great performance of the horse sacrifice took place. At the sacrifice Sri Krishna took farewell of the Pandavas who never met him again. The birthday anniversary of Sri Krishna is even now celebrated all over India by the orthodox Hindus with great religious fervour, but there is no death anniversary of Sri Krishna or of Rama Chandra. The birthday anniversary of the latter still lingers in the business world of India in the annual accounting, as an auspicious day to start the new books, but there is no religious ceremony or general holiday for that of Sri Krishna.

Death can be a great punishment and the fear of it a greater one than death itself. It carries everybody without distinction to some destination on the inevitable hour after the day of judgment. It is a horrible monster to those who tremble in fear of future sufferings in Hell; it is a kind and comforting saviour to those who are exalted by feelings of happiness for the everlasting enjoyments of Heaven. Death clears off useless persons to make room for the useful. Many die of the poison which their own vices breed in their blood.

Yudhisthira and the Pandavas were not like Durjodhana who was a mere figurehead wholly dependent on ministers like Karna and Sakuni and generals like Bhisma and Drona, who were conspicuous as agents of death. They did not have to fear the death that would come to those cruel Kuru warriors who shed torrents of blood and spread abroad the brutality of war for the sake of additional gold and extra territory. Durjodhana and his ministers would do anything that brought them in extra amusement and increased enjoyments. Durjodhana could be as savage as a lion and yet as simple as a child, for he could be

made to dance to any tune that his ministers chose to *whistle*. For such as these there was a Hell indeed.

Eternity is a time everlasting and without any limit, like the ocean below or the sky above. The idea of endless joy in Heaven and everlasting miseries in Hell was described by the Western poets but it materially differed from that of the East. The great Western dramatist Shakespeare rightly put it in the mouth of the Roman Emperor, Julius Cæsar :—

"Cowards die many deaths!
The valiant never taste of death but once."

The great epic describes how many ways a man dies other than by actual death. It was Sri Krishna enlightening Arjuna in the camp on the battle-field :

"A man of honour lives in the material world so long as he commands the homage and honour due to him, but when he is woefully dishonoured he is spoken of as one more dead than alive. A superior being on being addressed as 'thou' dies, *i.e.*, an insult to a superior is tantamount to death"*.

Durjodhana died many deaths before his actual death. He felt himself humiliated by his own actions and by his defeat at the hands of his adversaries; he even wanted to commit suicide but was prevented. At that time his disappointment and crushing defeat seemed almost more terrible than death. He saw all his invulnerable generals laid low on the battle-field with death staring from their faces and the greatest of them, Bhisma, lying in a bed of arrows, a convert to the Krishna cult, wishing victory for his adversary. It was then evident that his affairs were in a terrible state. It was like passing through hell. He hid himself in a lake with all the scars of battle on his body. It was something worse than Death or Hell for the same Durjodhana who had refused to give even so much earth to Yudhisthira as would cover the sharp end of an arrow. Bhima, his lifelong adversary in arms, ferreted him out of his lair, his last refuge of safety. Oh! what a death did Durjodhana suffer amidst the mutilated dead of the battle-field when, forlorn and helpless, Durjodhana was praying for his life to Yudhisthira and was denied, as he stood convicted of waging this unjust war in spite of all attempts at peace and conciliation! It was worse than the actual breaking of his thigh by Bhima. He received his death and punishment at the hands of the great upholder of justice, truth and peace (Dharmaputra), while in the fine sunset on the battle-field of Kurukshettra Sri Krishna was blowing his famous conch of victory and Draupadi joyfully decked her hair.

* Karna Parvan, Chap. LXIX, Verses 81-83.

The wicked Durjodhana even admitted that the victory of the great war was due to the practice of great religious austerities by Draupadi. The force of scandal in the drama of victory and love dwindles into nothing against the great impressions which the Pandavas and Draupadi made by their actions and exemplary lives. Their unjust persecution was the sure way of bringing them into the focus of drama for universal admiration. The great-grandfather of the evil Durjodhana was the age-old Bhisma who had the power of dying at will and whose birth was connected in Hindu mythology with the birth of the eight Vasus —a novel creation of the dramatic art. Art becomes a necessity when Nature fails to defeat a strange thing. The great-grandfather of Vyasa, Vasistha, was responsible for the birth of Bhisma. His curse brought the eight Vasus on earth as sons of King Santanu through Ganga—their births and emancipation by death were the great acts of the Goddess Ganga. The royal sage Bhagiratha was given the credit of emancipating his forefathers, the sons of King Sagara, from the great curse of Kapila, the author of Samkhya philosophy. The fact seems to have been that the royal sage removed the great grievances of the sage Kapila who built his hermitage near the confluence of the Ganges and the sea, by supplying him with good drinking water from the Ganges; it has since become a great shrine and is even now resorted to annually with great religious fervour.

The river Ganges is one of the great shrines revered as a path to the heaven of emancipation, and in the Puranas the Ganges is described as having flowed from the feet of the great God Vishnu. The Mahabharata begins with the theory that the sons should liberate the souls of their fathers and it was for this reason that Valakhilya asked Jaratkaru to marry, begetting Astika who stood against the performance of the snake sacrifice and declared it to be the wrong way of sending his father to Heaven. Bhisma was seen offering oblation to his dead father Santanu on the banks of the Ganges. It was said that Bhisma was very much attached to the Brahmanas and followed their advice when he placed the libation on Kusa grass instead of in the actual hand of his dead father who had streched it out to receive it. Bhisma was credited with being the son of Ganga who is supposed to have died without issue. The devout Hindus even now offer libations to the departed soul. The salvation of the soul is of utmost importance in the Hindu religion. It is demonstrated in the ascent of great kings like Nahusa and Yajati. Nahusa was rescued in his fall by

Yudhisthira and the fall of Yajati from heaven was arrested by his descendants.' The Hindu religion does not believe in everlasting perdition for the sinners; they can be redeemed by their own actions or by those of their sons. Bhisma died the death of a great martyr who committed suicide or wilful murder of his soul (reflected in his death at will) when he appeared as the commander-in-chief of the corrupted Kuru State under Durjodhana. His soul was at last redeemed by the grace of God when Sri Krishna appeared to him in his great agony of death as the great redeemer of sin and corruption. Bhisma was blessed with the tongue of wisdom by the great boon of Sri Krishna.

Sri Krishna had advised Yudhisthira to learn the lessons of administration and the duties of life before he read out to him that great spiritual lesson in the Kama Gita in the Asvamedha Parvan. Sri Krishna did not spare Yudhisthira, even when he wrongly considered himself to be the real cause of the great war of destruction. It was a case of his great vanity, Sri Krishna told Yudhisthira openly. He who was not able to kill the great enemy within him, called Ahamkara (the consciousness of Ego), could not be blessed with the wisdom of knowledge. The real author of death is ascribed to time, the call of heaven, for which the creator is responsible and nobody else, but the authors of the great Indian epics ascribed death to the curses of the regenerate sages and to the fathers of the heroes, as is exemplified in the deaths of Rama Chandra and the Emperor Yudhisthira. The births of the Pandavas and of Draupadi and her brothers were said to have been to fulfil the great missions of the kingdoms which their parents had left incomplete and unaccomplished and which they achieved on account of their great religious austerities. The voices of heaven were heard at the births of the Pandavas and evil ominous sounds were uttered by Durjodhana and Asvathama at the time of their births. The births and lives of the great heroes and heroines of the great epic demonstrate the truth that Shakespeare spoke of:—

"There's a divinity that shapes our ends,
Rough-hew them how we will." (Hamlet.)

Yama is said to have been the God of Death, and the work of death is everlasting. Death forces the soul to leave the frail animal body in spite of all the human efforts to preserve it, either by the science of the Yoga system or by medicine. The great question of finding out a retreat for it, a sanctuary after the hubbub of life, is raised in the last act of the drama when the disappearance of actors from the stage takes place. The prize of

immortal felicity was in sight for those who sincerely sought it and followed the great advice of the Aila Gita or Yajati Gatha of their forefathers and did not pursue the fleeting pleasures of the senses. Solitude and meditation will alone obtain the salvation of the soul when duty and virtue have been neglected. Such a life of contrition awaited the old Dhritarastra and his good consort Gandhari after they had enjoyed the happiest part of their lives in the reign of Yudhisthira rather than under their son. They retired to the forest to end their lives in Yoga practice. The pious Kunti, the mother of the Pandavas who encouraged her sons to recover the Kingdom to redeem the lost prestige and honour of her dead husband Pandu, demonstrated to the world that she would not enjoy anything of the world after the death of her husband and also went to the forest to end her life in Yoga practice. The names of Satyavana and Savitri are even now revered for giving a crushing defeat to death and its ruler Yama. The religious observance of Savitri is still observed in India and she has been given the crown of immortality.

To Yudhisthira the treasures of the empire appeared as mere toys and diversions of youth. He gazed upon the lofty forehead of Arjuna who had come to deliver him the sad message of the cruel massacre of the Yadavas at the famous shrine of Pravasa as the result of a drunken brawl. Arjuna had been unable to find Sri Krishna and Balarama but they left him a message to perform the funeral obsequies of the Yadavas—which he did.

There are two kinds of emancipation in Hindu theology, *viz.*, Jivana Mukti and Karma Mukti. The former is liberation of life without death, *i.e.*, all fruits of works are burnt by the true knowledge of self and soul in the universe. The latter is described in the Vrihadaranayaka Upanishada (IX, 4.6) as follows:—" He who is without desire, free from desire, whose desires have been fulfilled, whose desire is the self, his vital spirits do not emigrate; being Brahmana, he becomes Brahman." The Mahabharata presents the great example of Jivana Mukti in Yudhisthira; it is represented in his passing to heaven in person in the dramatic Mahabharata.

The path of Yama is mentioned in the Rig Veda,* which is really the same as the Road of the Fathers, for Yama was originally the ruler of the Fathers. The Swargarohana Parvana of the current Mahabharata seems to have a similar conception to that of the Satapatha Brahmana.† " The flames on both sides

* Rig Veda: I. 38, 5.
† Satapatha Brahmana: I. 9, 3, 2.

of the path which burn the wicked, but do not touch the pure soul. The same path leads either to the Gods or to the Fathers. On both sides two flames are ever-burning; they scorch him who deserves to be scorched, and allow him to pass who deserves to do so." "The goal of the journey of the departed is simply the place where he will meet the Fathers, those who were distinguished for piety and penance, or those who fell in battle, or those who during life were generous with their wealth." "The departed was told to meet the two Kings delighting in (sradha) offerings, Yama and the God Varuna." Yama is the King of the departed, the God of Death,* and has two dogs as his messengers.† All these clearly explain the going of Yudhisthira to Heaven with a dog and his great trials on the road to Heaven.

God Siva was worshipped by Sri Krishna‡ for a son by Jambavati through the good offices of the sage Upamanyu and Samba, the son-in-law of Durjodhana, was born, who happened to be the cause of the destruction of the Yadavas. Siva is said to be the God of Destruction. Brahma, the creator, is found to be the preceptor of God Siva in the Mahabharata (Shanti Parvan) and makes him accept Narayana as God. There are odes to Vishnu and Siva, containing thousands of names, also in the Mahabharata. The divine minstrel Narada was the preceptor of Vyasa who introduced the unitarian worship of Narayana in place of the worship of the Hindu triad of Brahma, Vishnu and Siva. The Hindu Puranas and the Mahabharata begin with the adoration of Narayana and the Goddess of Learning, Saraswati, whose great worshipper was the sage Yajnavalkya. The Mahabharata deals with the fourfold divisions of the objects of life, *viz*:—The objects of desire (Kama), worldly prosperity (Artha), religious merit (Dharma) and emancipation (Moksha). The four aspects in which God is revered are: Existence (Sat), Knowledge (Chit), Joy (Ananda) and Spirit (Atman). The birth of the great author Vyasa is figuratively put, illustrating the object of desire:—

"The God of love a fisher is;
Woman, his line, his bait, desire;
And man's the fish that soon is caught
And cooked in passion's fire."§

The doctrine of the translation of Faith (Bhakti) is not clearly given in the Mahabharata. The ways of emancipation are

* Rig Veda, X. 165. 4.
† Ibid, X. 14. 12.
‡ Anusasana Parvan, Chap. XIV.
§ Dr. Hopkin's translation.

five, *viz.*, quietism (Santa), servitude (Dasya), friendship (Sakhya), filial piety (Batsalya), Divine love, not of flesh and blood (Madhurjya). The Srimad Bhagavata deals with them very clearly and delicately. The characters of the Mahabharata can be made to fit in with these ways of emancipation. The supreme beauty of Heaven can be attained through these stages of Divine love. Yudhisthira was an example of quietism (Santa), Bhima of servitude (Dasya), Arjuna of friendship (Sakhya), Kunti of filial love (Batsalya), and Draupadi of Divine love, not of flesh and blood (Madhurjya). The marriage of Draupadi with the five Pandavas was nothing but a spiritual union of souls, as is clearly said by Arjuna in the Mousala Parvan. Draupadi is represented as the union of the five qualities of virtue necessary for spiritual success in life, in conquering the sins of flesh and blood. Draupadi's great spouse Yudhisthira, virtue incarnate, did not leave any son from their union to rule the earthly throne. The Mahabharata is a book of religion and its heroes and heroines are the representations of the ways of spiritual emancipation and not characters of drama or history. Divine love is the great magnetic needle of God above. A ship cannot be steered across the sea to its destination without the help of the prismatic compass; likewise success in the spiritual world cannot be attained unless the heart is touched by the great magnetic influence of Divine love with which the great Radha touched the heart of Sri Krishna in his youth. The daughter of King Yajati Madhavi did not marry, but her four sons by four Kings saved the fall of Yajati from Heaven; thus it was the fruits of that forbidden tree which led Yajati to Heaven and saved him from Hell.

The earthly relationship may be of great importance to human society but in the spiritual world it has no place. Yudhisthira and Draupadi did not seem to have entertained any mutual ill-feeling as husband and wife; the great author of the dramatic Mahabharata did not show that, even where they took opposite viewpoints as at the great gambling match in the Kuru Court, it was not on the grounds of marital rights. The human body has very little to do with the spiritual or religious world. It is in the heart and mind that the wonderful conception of the duties of humanity to perform the great task of helping in the creation of the material and spiritual world is formed. Draupadi was not an example of the domestic love of a faithful wife like Gandhari.

The domain of Divine love was built at Dwarka which

was swept away with the disappearance of Sri Krishna. The scenes that the great poet Valmiki showed in the golden palace of Ravana of Ceylon were outclassed and surpassed by the scenes at Dwarka with its sixteen thousand devoted princesses of India who were not the victims of abduction or conquest but the prisoners of love. The pilgrims of Divine love are the five ladies whose names are now remembered and uttered to cast away sin. The main source of activity, strength and happiness on earth is demonstrated in true love. Happiness is a state of glad activity, and not a negative state attained through shutting out temptation by the rules of society and laws of the State in order to preserve honour and chastity, and without any consideration of the heart and soul within. In actual experience of life there is plenty of vice in the world; only by self-control and clear conscience good girls can make their bold stands against the spiteful slanders of wicked men. 'It was on account of slander that Rama Chandra, the great King of India, is said to have exiled his devoted wife and not to have married again but put a golden image of her in the horse sacrifice. In the days of Yudhisthira and Draupadi women could better stand against slanderous gossip and idle rumour. A strict religious training and a strong conception of duty kept them in the paths of duty; they walked with their eyes fixed firmly on the future life and averted from the temptations of earthly enjoyment. No longer were attempts to pick holes in the reputations of Kings and Queens tolerated. Moreover, the princesses of those days could stand by their own as exemplified in the Swayamvara marriage. Rukmini and Subhadra requested their lovers to help them to make the marriage of their choice rather than accept others nominated by their parents. True love became a predominant question in the social world when Divine love was proclaimed as the only path to heaven. It was not so clearly put in the dramatic Mahabharata.

The great writers who are preachers of religion leave an indelible impression of Divine love in their great works. The poetic and dramatic greatness of the Mahabharata lies in the great tragedy of death. He who renounced the pleasures of life by self-sacrifice at the altars of duty, love and mercy is revered with the name of "Yudhisthira," *i.e.*, one who is not affected by anything in the battle of life. It was not a question of the obedience or disobedience of God's command as in the Garden of Eden. The man of spiritual greatness goes to Heaven through culture, knowledge and practice of the great union

between the individual soul (Atma) and primeval soul (Parmatma). Human greatness cannot be obtained without a struggle. It cannot be found in Destiny. Soul force comes into play during the great trials and temptation of life. Love cannot hide the truth from the loving eyes of humanity. No atonement is possible after death. The dramatic Mahabharata sheds enlightenment on the customs and manners of Heaven in the falls of Nahusa, Mahavisa and Indra for the casting of evil looks on beautiful girls and for the killing of Brittasura in an unjust war. The praising of his own actions caused Yajati to fall from heaven. In like manner the dramatic Mahabharata describes the fall of the Pandavas, one by one, on their journey to heaven, ascribing the causes for the same in each case through the mouth of Yudhisthira. That they were mere flights of imagination is apparent when Yudhisthira refused to go to heaven without his brothers and wife after himself assigning the causes of their deaths and falls and after specially giving out that a dead man could not be brought to life when he prayed for due permission to allow the dog, alive, to follow him to heaven. He would not go to heaven without the dog, and this was a trial which he passed successfully. His admittance to Heaven was the last and most startling scene of the drama. The enjoyment of his entrance to heaven was spoilt by the sight of Durjodhana with his friends and brother sitting there and his failure to find any of his own brothers or his wife. He was told that they were in Hell, whereupon he refused to be in Heaven without them. He was then taken there and the great miseries did not dissuade him to leave them, as they were suffering and anxious to go to Heaven where he had been before. The whole scene vanished like a mirage in the desert. Death is an illusion! He was now directed to bathe in the Ganges of Heaven. The great King Rama Chandra disappeared in the river Saraju and the Pandavas and Draupadi in the Ganges of the Himalayas after Yoga practice, as is clearly stated in the Srimad Bhagavata. Varuna is the God of the river, and the human soul passes the Indian Styx (Vaitarani) by the gift of a cow. It is related in the Mahabharata how Nahusa passed into Heaven for such a gift of a cow.*

Yudhisthira's undisguised delight at finding himself in the delightful company of the creator in Heaven above through the Angel of Death was the divine conception of Vyasa and was dramatised. His real life was the great and glorious

* Anusasana Parvana.

awakening of Divine love, the goal of Heaven, in the union of the human soul with that of the Creator, reflected in the Universe. His great persecution and privations were like the smoke of the sacrificial fire on the altar of Duty and Love. He would not follow the example of the remorseful Ramá Chandra who had disbelieved the judgment of the fire ordeal by placing a golden image of his spouse in the Horse sacrifice. What malice might have said against his mother and his wife he treated with the contempt it deserved.

Strict discipline ensures ease of mind in poverty or privation, which the gift of Fortune often destroys. Ease of mind is incomparably the most valuable of all possessions. The great scholarship of Yudhisthira, endowed with the religion of Divine love, left its mark upon his subjects. The constant and regular course of the Sun does greater good than the mere glare of a comet in the sky, like unto the path of a conqueror. Earth is lighted by the rays of the Sun and agriculture depends upon its heat, but people only gaze at the strange appearance of a comet, remarking on its peculiar shape and light. The very essence of piety and of goodness of soul are reflected in the words of Sir Phillip Sydney when he offered a glass of water, placed in his hand for his own needs, to the dying soldier, saying: "Thy need is greater than mine." Every man of talent and culture gives an account of himself in some brief expression of piety, and a few reasonably expressed words call forth the great admiration of the world. Yudhisthira increased many times over the legacy of virtuous living left him by his great teachers, so that generation after generation might enjoy its full benefit.

The great Indian Epic proves the great truth about the immortality of the soul in the passage describing Yudhisthira's passing to Heaven in person. Death is like darkness and the Divine light makes the morning—one sees the pleasant glow of Divine love in the morning Sun, the fierce fire of duty in the noon, and the warning of darkness at the grand departure in the evening. The religious and spiritual success of life is reflected in the final departure of man or woman. "Know thyself and the God within." There is a bridge within the human heart and mind by which one can realise the immortality of the soul. Know God alone and self becomes one with Him. The Vedanta sutras have opened out more vistas by strict reasoning than have the Upanishads by guesses and postulates. The journey of the soul along the paths of the Fathers and of the Gods was old

legend. "Thou art that" is accepted by the Vedantists; but "Thou" (who for a time being didst seem to be something by thyself) "art that and art really nothing apart from the Divine essence (Tattvamasi)." To know God one must realise that in knowledge of Him stands the eternal life. The two different identities of man and God become united in one (Sohama).

Nature declares the time for the retirement of great men; even the great Western poet Shakespeare says:—

"When beggars die, there are no comets seen:
The heaven themselves blaze forth the death of princes."
—(Julius Cæsar, Act II, Sec. II.)

Yudhisthira read the signs of the time for his retirement. The wind showered stones, the courses of the rivers began to flow in opposite directions, the Sun's dial; it seemed, was crossed by the headless trunks of human beings, and meteors fell from the sky. Yudhisthira relinquished the throne in the sunshine of his glorious reign to occupy a greater and better throne in heaven and in the pious heart of the world. All the good citizens and relations followed the Pandavas to bid them *adieu* but none could think of dissuading them from their firm resolve. None could persuade Yudhisthira to reign till the end of his life. He retired into the Himalayas to make due preparation for the approaching end of an earthly career of success. There is of course a meaning behind old age and death. The value of the material body and earthly existence depend upon one's experience. All the joys and sorrows of earthly possessions and senses only gradually fail in the aging body; often as the body fails to respond to them, the love for them advances. Some old man does not think that his time has come to retire from the world; he likes it and enjoys it still; this is indeed the wonder of wonders in human life.

The coronation of Parikshit transformed the dismal world into a second heaven. It was King Parikshit who carried on the great work begun by the great Yudhisthira. Yudhisthira removed the incarnation of Kali and his successor assigned to him a place in which to reign. It was a place where dice-play, drinking, hunting and women could be indulged and revelled in.

The great Siva was not worshipped in the sacrifice of Daksha, the father of the wife of Siva, and she gave up her life as a protest. There was a fight between Narayana and Siva and it resulted in the victory of the former. The victor threw the body of the ideal chaste lady all over India and in the progress

of the wheel of time she was worshipped in different names in fifty-one different places. The question of domestic happiness and peace came to be considered in the form of worship of the Goddess Durga. In the Purana, Kala (time), as destroyer, appeared in the sacrifice of Daksha and she in the form of Kali is even now worshipped standing over the body of Siva, dancing in her nakedness with a garland of human skulls round her neck, representing death to infidels and glory to her devotees. Siva bore the name of Mrityunjoya, Victor of Death, by making Kali give up her work of destruction. The great Asuras were killed by Durga and Kali.

There was the worship of the Goddness of Wealth, Lakshmi, when rice and barley were ripening in their season. The Vedic priests were called Ritviz which literally means "the season sacrificers." It is well known that most of the Vedic sacrifices depended on the new or full moon far more than on any solar phenomena. There were sacrifices of the full and new moon and of the seasons. The astral influences are quite manifest in the Vedic sacrifices. The Mahabharata presents the different stages of life in their different aspects. There was a revolt against religious materialism and arid ritualism. There was the noble principle of moral responsibility patent in the doctrines of Atman or Soulself in the Upanishads. Sri Krishna was instrumental in the cultural federation of Greater India and represented himself as Divine love on an island of love in the midst of the ocean and not like Narayana, sleeping over the body of a great snake, Ananta, with Lakshmi attending him with care and devotion.

Draupadi, who in the Mahabharata was the Goddess of Prosperity, came out of the Fire of her father's sacrifice to recover the lost kingdom. She was thus a nationalist woman and was adored for this. She was the prize which the Pandavas won at the great Swayamvara ceremony of marriage under the guidance of Vyasa and with the decision of Sri Krishna. These are the men whom Draupadi affected to despise at her marriage ceremony; and she was the reward of those who followed the path of rectitude. She was not a slave to anybody, be he a King or an Emperor, but she was born to serve the five essential qualities of virtue on which the domestic happiness of a sovereign depended—truth, justice, faith, duty and love—and for that reason she was declared to be the wife of the five. She did not allow any man to look upon his wife as a piece of property. She placed the real relation of companionship to the forefront of Hindu society—above the duty only to bear children in order

to bring salvation to the husband's forefathers. Man and woman must develop side by side—she cleared away what used to be suspicion, overlordism, blindness and injustice to a devoted wife. The very ceremony of Swayamvara speaks for itself—the power and right of a princess to choose her own husband. The plain truth seems to have been that real lasting friendship cannot be satisfying, inspiring or amusing unless the contracting parties are drawn to one another by the qualities of head and heart. The mere beauty of person or possession of wealth did not carry any weight with a cultured princess like Draupadi. It was for that reason that Draupadi selected Yudhisthira to be her husband—a man who had all the five qualities of virtue. Marriage in Ancient India was not a question of rearing children or satisfying the animal urge of Nature in man or woman. It was a religious institution of salvation, so very important in those days.

Sakuntala appealed to King Dushyanta to recognise her son Bharata by his own conscience; and the voice of Heaven was heard after it. The Mahabharata deals with the dictates of conscience more than any other writing in the Hindu religious literature of Ancient India. Mature men and women of Ancient India needed courage and self-control and thus the Swayamvara marriage came into prominence. The girl wished to have a husband of her choice in a Swayamvara marriage ceremony. The girl has to prove to the world by her education and courage that she has not the slightest fear of being able to protect herself against the wicked world. She can stand by her own. A true and virtuous wife is not a seeker of earthly enjoyments of life but sacrifices them at the altars of Duty and Love. A true wife helps the husband out of his difficulties and shares his misfortunes and miseries. Savitri and Draupadi were the outstanding examples of such true wives of India. Draupadi was said to have been of the same temperament as Sri Krishna and they were called friends of heart as examples of Sakya. She went to Heaven in the same manner as Sri Krishna and the Pandavas did. The deliverance of soul is not the total extinction but the great union between the divine and human souls. The great poet Kalidasa and the Vedanta philosophy demonstrate this kind of salvation quite clearly. The Srimad Bhagavata bears testimony to the fact that they all went to Heaven by Yoga practice, and not as the dramatic Mahabharata describes. The Mahabharata says:—"The worshipper of Sri Krishna is freed from rebirth. He enters after death the soul of Sri Krishna,

just as the libations of clarified butter, when sanctified with the incantations of Veda by the great sages, reach the God worshipped through the mouth of the fire.* God is not made of human intellectual notions. God is felt and cannot be seen with the common eyes of human beings. The existence of God can be realised through knowledge, love and faith.

* Shanti Parvan, Chap. XLVIII, Verse 92.